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ST. EUSTACE;

OR,

THE HUNDRED-AND-ONE.

A NOVEL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

VANE IRETON ST. JOHN.

VOL. III.

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ST. EUSTACE ;

OR,

THE HUNDRED AND ONE.

CHAPTER I.

THE three travellers knew that they would have to cross the mountains four times before arriving in France: and therefore took precautions accordingly, arming themselves well and taking a servant each. They rode on horseback as being most convenient, and took no luggage with them. Before departing from Cadiz, Armand sent a letter to the king praying him not to banish his father and mother from the country: and declaring that

if he would grant him an audience, he would be able to bring grave charges against his enemy, Father Pierre.

The priest who had gone forward before their departure arrived at the Sierra Morena about a day in advance of them. These mountains were, in the seventeenth century, greatly infested with banditti, and as Father Pierre had no scruples as to using any means to an end, he had given the Spanish priest—Father Garlitos—*carte blanche* to do as he pleased. To these, therefore, the latter resolved to apply. If Armand were seized, robbed, and kept a prisoner by banditti, how could it be laid at the door of the priesthood? It might also be done privately, and a party of men sent along the mountains nearly the whole way to France without being discovered.

Once in France, he would be amenable to

the law: and being taken into the very heart of the country how could he fail to be recognised and seized as soon as left to himself? Thus Father Pierre would rid himself of his deadliest enemy without any possibility of being discovered as a participator in a scheme for his destruction.

The banditti of the Sierra Morena would not agree to the proposal of the priest because the sum was not sufficiently large.

“We shall seize the gentlemen,” said the leader of the band, “should they pass the mountains; but on their paying us a ransom they will be set free.”

“Will you not do it on the promise of a much larger sum?” urged the Spanish priest, “say twice what I have offered!”

“If the Senor will give me his promise in writing for that amount, I shall cause it to be done,” replied the leader of the banditti.

The priest accordingly did so, not doubting that Father Pierre would gladly give that sum, and twice that sum to see his enemy in his power.

“Remember, Father Garlitos,” cried the bandit, “if this is not paid in a month’s time you will have to answer for it. You will be kept as a hostage till it is paid if it is not before then. My emissaries never fail me.”

“You must not allow the travellers to suppose that I have anything to do with their capture,” said Garlitos, “as in that case, should they escape, it would entail endless scandal on the priesthood.”

“Yes, I suppose you have got a character to keep up: and it would be unpleasant to be found out in such an escapade,” exclaimed the Bandit, laughing, “however, you shall be quite safe in my hands. When are they to be expected here?”

“I think to-morrow morning they will be here early. They are well armed, and number six in all. We do not wish them to be hurt if possible; that is to say dangerously, but of course a wound or two will be necessary to capture them.”

“Don’t you think that the sight of my band will frighten them if we mustered in full force,” cried Cantalija the robber.

“Not in the slightest, were you to number twice as many as you do. The leader of the party is an old soldier, so in fact are three of them, and have fought their way through hundreds before now.”

The bandit listened attentively, and then said,

“Well in that case it will not do to use mere force. If any of my fellows were winged their blood would rise and I could not restrain them. I must employ stratagem. You must

be tired, Father, let me take you inside and give you some wine."

The spot, where this interview took place, was a ledge of rock where the Priest had found the Chief sitting amid his men. As Garlitos ascended the road on his jaded horse—like the knight of the Rueful Countenance—they eyed him with wonder and suspicion, but when they saw that he was on good terms with Cantalija, they retired and allowed the two to speak in private. The bandit, now that that they had finished their interview conducted the priest a little distance where a ledge of rock overhung the path.

A dark passage, under this led to the abode of Cantalija. A large cave well lighted up was filled with men drinking and carousing, while some women seated here and there were singing or mending sword belts, or polishing muskets. At one end were several barrels filled

with gunpowder and provisions. The men all stopped speaking when the bandit entered, and sat down by themselves, but he cried out in a jovial voice,

“Come, my boys, up with you; give us a good song. This gentleman likes drinking and singing as much as we do.”

Thus invited they resumed their former demeanour, although in the presence of a stranger they did not feel the ease and freedom that they experienced when by themselves. A tall handsome Spaniard, however, bawled out a rude song, which as it contained ludicrous pictures of priests and monks, extracted many a hoarse laugh at the expense of Garlitos, who however laughed too. When he had been here a short time the bandit donned the habit of an alguazil and whispered to his guest,

“I am going to begin my scheme, keep

these fellows here if you can, and do not suffer any one to follow me."

He then departed, leaving Garlitos in a state of bewilderment. What could he be going to do already? and why did he not make him his *confidant*.

However it was useless to conjecture, and dismissing all thought of Father Pierre from his mind, he applied to the bottle for knowledge, and was so studious that ere an hour had passed he was carried to his couch in a state of sweet oblivion of the world.

CHAPTER II.

THE disguised bandit strode down the road leading from the Sierra Morena to the little town of La Carolina. The sun was setting over the mountains, and ere he reached the gates the twilight had set in. He naturally imagined that the travellers, being so numerous, would put up at the largest inn; and he therefore directed his steps towards the Golden Grapes, a fine hotel, in the very centre of the town. He was well known in the place in his character of bandit, but disguised as he now was he was passed unnoticed even by the very minions of the law.

Armand, Hercule, Bassompierre, and Beaufort had indeed put up for the night at the Golden Grapes. They did not intend, however, as the priest had supposed, to cross the mountains in the morning, but determined to wait until the following evening, in order to rest their jaded horses and prepare for the difficult journey. The servant who had betrayed them to the priest was ill informed when he told Garlitos their proposed route. They indeed intended to cross the Sierra Morena, but not to proceed further till they received the King's answer. This they were to await at Alcazar S. Juan. If favourable they were to proceed to France; if unfavourable they were to take ship at Barcelona and sail to Genoa. Thence their route was to lie to Germany, which, with a kind of presentiment, Armand resolved to visit before going to Italy.

Cantalija entered the Golden Grapes, and swaggered into the room in the insolent manner which the Spanish police generally assumed, and called for some wine. The newly-arrived travellers, however, were not there; their servants were sitting drinking, but the masters had engaged a room to themselves, with orders to the landlord to grant admittance to no one. The bandit, however, was not there long before he had learned that the travellers *had* put up at the inn, and intended crossing the Sierra Morena on the following evening.

As this information was all he wanted, the false alguazil soon departed, and struck down into a narrow street, which was, however, very well lighted. By the light of one of the murky oil lamps Cantalija was enabled to perceive over one of the doors the words

SEBASTIAN ALDANA, TAILOR.

Knocking here, he was admitted by a little

girl, who, although much obscured by dirt, showed evident signs of a pretty face.

“Is your father at home, Catalina?” said the bandit.

“Yes, senor,” murmured the girl, trembling at the sight of the alguazil’s dress.

Cantalija laughed.

“Ha, ha, ha!—Catalina, you don’t know me dressed like this, do you? It shows the disguise is complete when my own friends don’t recognise me.”

The little Catalina, who appeared quite relieved on finding it was not really an officer of justice, bounded up stairs to tell her father. As the bandit entered the room, he looked at his daughter in surprise.

“Yes, she has told you rightly,” cried Cantalija; “it is I—disguised so that the very alguazils themselves nodded to me as I passed. I have come to speak to you on very important business.”

“Go up to your mother, Catalina,” said Sebastian, who was a man of about thirty four, “and bid her prepare something for supper. Do not come down until I call you.”

The bandit, as soon as the child went away, detailed his plans to his friend the tailor. He wished him to act in the capacity of guide to the three travellers now staying at the Golden Grapes, and to lead them towards his place of abode.

“You will incur no danger, Sebastian,” said the bandit, “for as soon as you see us close round them, you can make off.”

“Oh! I wasn’t thinking of the danger, but it is a piece of treachery which I don’t quite like,” replied Aldana.

“As to that, if you are so very particular, I can apply to our old friend Bajos, the mule driver, he won’t stick at trifles.”

The tailor thought awhile.

"I am a poor man, Cantalija," said he, "or I would not undertake to betray any one. What do you propose doing to them?"

"Ah, by the by, that may serve to ease your conscience," replied the robber, laughing, "we are commissioned to do this by the priests. We are not even going to rob them."

"Very well, it shall be done in that case," said the other, "I will go to-morrow morning and offer my services as a guide. Now let us have some supper."

They went upstairs, where Aldana's wife—a pretty young Spaniard—entertained them hospitably, while Catalina sat in a corner without speaking. The bandit went away rather late and strode away to the Sierra, fully satisfied of the success of his enterprise on the morrow.

"Is it necessary to have a guide across the

mountain," asked Armand of the landlord on the next day.

"It is, Senor, but I do not know of one. I have no doubt however that if it is known that six travellers are here, a guide will soon be forthcoming; should anyone call to-day I will send him to you."

Sebastian Aldana was true to his engagement with the bandit, and called early on the intended victims. As they knew nothing to the contrary, and the landlord gave him a good character for honesty, Dechappelle bade him be with them towards evening, and then went out with his friends to walk in the town.

As they were proceeding down one of the streets Armand suddenly dropped the arms of Hercule and Beaufort, and ran down the road. He turned the corner and disappeared. He had quick eyes, and had recognised the tall

figure of the priest as he strode along gazing kindly on the passing crowd.

“Oh, Garlitos,” cried he in an outwardly hearty tone, “you here in La Carolina. You must have hastened away very rapidly to arrive so soon in town.”

“Yes, I am here on important business, and when matters of religion are in question, the Church finds no more earnest servant than myself,” returned the Priest solemnly.

“I dare say not,” returned Armand, “and I suppose when your friends want you to do them a service you always do it.”

“Yes, if it be possible,” answered the priest, alarmed at this fancied allusion to Father Pierre.

“In that case,” said Dechapelle, “I shall ask you a favour. Be kind enough to return as quickly as possible to Cadiz, and cease watching us, for I will give you a piece of in-

formation; if you don't go you most likely will be compelled to be carried there."

"I do not understand you," exclaimed the priest.

"Perhaps not; in plain language, then, if I find you dogging my steps any longer, I'll shoot you like a dog."

The Spaniard's likeness to the Knight of La Mancha did not extend to his courage, and this bold speech rather staggered him. However he imagined it would not exactly do to acknowledge that he was on his track, and therefore he said:

"You mistake my purpose; I am here on Church business, and it is only by a curious coincidence that we meet here in La Carolina. Probably our routes will diverge here. Adieu, senor, a pleasant journey."

CHAPTER III.

It was evening as the little cavalcade departed from the Golden Grapes. The reason of Armand's wish to cross the mountains at night is a mystery not easy to be solved: but he probably knew that there was an *auberge* situated on the summit of one of the first eminences which they would reach about nightfall, and thus enable them to divide their journey, and also by departing when least expected baffle the schemes of his enemies.

From the appearance of Garlitos in La Carolina he felt sure that mischief was brewing. He never suspected, however, that the

priests would league themselves with the bandits, and therefore feared nothing more from them than a plundering of their money. The principal part of it, however, had been forwarded to Alcazar S. Juan, so that even this would not put them to any serious inconvenience.

As they approached the mountains the day had just begun to redden into sunset. The orb hung fiery red in the horizon, just sending over the ridges of the mountain a deep glow that tinted all objects within its reach. Scarcely a cloud was in the sky, and only a kind of thick vapour surrounded the tops of the mountains. Many a peasant returning from his labours was whistling a gay tune, while here and there on ledges of rock sat men and women—the latter dressed in gaudy petticoats reaching a little above the ankle, and boddices of various hues, while a little

jaunty head-dress added to the lustre of the rich dark hair. The men wore black jackets, velvet breeches, grey stockings, and the sombrero. Many of them were good looking, some of the girls even pretty; but the men seemed uneasy, and awaiting some event.

Although Armand had not the slightest suspicion who they were, he noticed that as he and his six companions—the guide, Hercule, Henry, and their servants—wound up the mountain path many of them followed until perhaps twenty of them were walking behind. He could not imagine that those unarmed and apparently harmless people were the brigands of the Sierra Morena. As, however, he and his friends were well armed, and their horses seemed to get over the ground very well, he hoped in case of necessity they might be able to try their speed.

At length on arriving at a place where

there was a choice of two roads, the guide said :

“Senors, I fear I have lost my way; however, I think this is the one that will lead us again to the high road.”

Thus saying, he struck into the defile that led to the brigand's cave. His manner was so suspicious that, after speaking to Hercule and Beaufort, Armand made his mule advance at a trot, until he reached the side of Aldana.

“Mind you,” said he, “if you lead us wrongly, so that we meet any misfortune from your carelessness or treachery, I will blow your brains out with this pistol.”

The guide, who knew what he was about to do, shuddered, but answered quickly :

“If Senor suspects we had better turn back. It will be easy to retrace our steps to La Carolina.”

“Oh, no,” said Armand, “lead on. I cannot lose time.”

Sebastian urged his mule on once more. His heart beat quickly, and his breath came with difficulty, as he approached the place where lived the brigand Cantalija. He did not doubt that as soon as the cavalcade was seen the banditti would rush out, and his escape would be impossible. He thought once or twice of making a bolt, but did not like to stand the chance of Armand's missing.

His fears, however, appeared without foundation: as they neared the caverns not a sound was to be heard, not a living thing was to be seen. The banditti no longer followed them, but sat on ledges of rock on the sides of the road below, while here and there a peasant was firing at the few birds that hovered over the crags. In one place a little

stream trickled from under the loose rocks—in another a torrent rushed down, leaping from point to point, till it was lost to sight. Many a stately fir overhung their path, which increased in difficulty as they ascended, until at length, after passing the abode of Cantalija, it broke off abruptly, leaving only a narrow pathway.

“We must, I fear, retrace our steps,” said the guide, astonished at the non-appearance of Cantalija.

“Not at all,” said Armand, “we can ascend that pathway. Go on in front, and we will follow.”

So saying, he gave a slight blow to Aldana’s mule, which sent the animal at a sharp trot up the narrow gorge. There was no help for it, and Sebastian went on, never losing sight of the terrible vengeance that Cantalija would doubtless wreak upon him. The bandit, how-

ever, had altered his plans. Fearing that the tumult of so bold a capture would be noticed by some stray peasant, he had resolved on a stratagem equally sure if not equally bold.

At length, on issuing from the narrow pass, they found themselves compelled to traverse a pathway scarcely more than two feet broad. On one side rose a cliff almost perpendicular; on the other lay a deep, dark precipice, with a peaceful though quick stream running along the bed beneath. The mules, however, were very sure of foot, and trotted leisurely along, never heeding the depth or terrible aspect of the declivity, and stopping short if any large stone lay in their way. Then stepping lightly over the obstruction they proceeded as merrily as ever.

The *auberge* on the top of a high eminence soon came in sight. Although apparently near, however, the travellers had to go up hill

and down hill, winding hither and thither, before they reached it. The sun had now set, twilight had commenced, and a dim, uncertain light hung over the mountains. The sky was of a very peculiar colour, and clouds springing up as if by magic dashed themselves impetuously against the crags, and then rolled down into the valleys beneath, like huge masses of thick smoke.

“I think we shall have a storm,” said Hercule Bassompierre. “I don’t understand this Spanish climate; but if the sky tells us right there will be one.”

“Yes: and it is lucky for us we didn’t come away this morning as we intended,” replied Armand, “or we should now have been thick in the mountains, and perhaps without shelter.”

“We are going to stop at yon *auberge*,

then, I suppose," said Beaufort. "A very good idea. We shall be able to sup."

"I expect that is very far off," answered Armand, laughing; "if you fancy that we are near the inn you never were more mistaken in your life. We have a good journey yet. Is it not so, Sebastian?"

"Yes," was the only answer deigned by the guide, who continued to ride sullenly at their head. Never imagining that Cantaliya had changed his plan, he thought that now the best way was to take them the nearest road to the *auberge* of the Sierra Morena, and then make his escape as quickly as possible.

As they continued to ride on, the shades of night began to fall. The clouds commenced their assemblage, and, ere darkness had covered the mountains half an hour, the storm began to mutter in the distance. The

thunder first faintly heard from afar, soon began to gather strength, and burst in fierce booms over the crags. The forked lightning leaped from rock to rock, and seemed to light up the valleys in a blaze as it rushed down upon the earth and was lost. Louder and louder burst the thunder; the rain descended in torrents, and the mules went on slowly, their limbs trembling with fear.

“We didn’t gain much by your prudence,” muttered Beaufort to Armand, as the quick descending torrent drenched him to the skin.

“Well, you can’t have lost much,” said Dechappelle, “for we should have caught it any how.”

No more words were spoken. The travelers went on in silence—the storm had the talk all to itself. About ten o’clock they clattered into the courtyard of the *auberge*. To none was the sight of the comfortable inn

more welcome than to Beaufort, who, with the prospect of a good supper before him seemed to forget his cold bath.

The large room of the inn was crowded with travellers, who had apparently just taken refuge from the storm. Some, however, appeared as if they had been enjoying a quiet evening's chat regardless of the rage of nature without. As no sign of recognition passed between the guide and any one, Armand, who was watching him closely, imagined all was right: and ordered a substantial supper.

Having partaken of a very hearty meal, the half-drowned travellers adjourned to rest: the three masters to one room, the three servants and the guide to another. According to the advice of Armand they did not entirely undress: and barricading the door were soon in the land of dreams.

CHAPTER IV.

AT this time the bandit system in Spain had assumed a kind of organization: bands of marauders took each their posts on the mountains, and never invaded each other's property. Inhabiting for the most part the very heart of the Sierras, they carried terror and dismay into every hearth around. They pillaged the richest dwellings, kidnapped rich travellers, and kept them captives until ransomed, carried off maidens, and often gave each other support against the authorities. The military detachments sent against them were often routed with slaughter; for the bandits, who

could not perhaps have coped with them in the open field, were able in their mountain fastnesses to resist all attacks.

Cantalija, therefore, knew that in the step he was about to take there existed no greater danger than usual. Even if there had been, the liberal reward he was promised would have induced him to brave much. If his attempt failed—and there appeared little chance of such an emergency—he possessed a retreat further on in the mountains, known to none save his own band—not excepting even Sebastian, the tailor. Here it was that he intended to secrete his prisoners, while the men were preparing to start.

The storm abated a short while after the travellers entered the inn, and at length entirely disappeared, giving place to a star-lit sky, and a moon that cast bright gleams over the valleys and ravines of the Sierra Morena.

As all the persons congregated in the large room of the *auberge* could not be accommodated with beds, many of them went out, among the rest Cantaliya and his companions, who formed part of the number.

The apartment in which the three travellers slept—not for economy but for safety—was an oblong one that overlooked a broad plateau, with scarcely a mark of vegetation. The shadow of the house prevented much of this from being seen, so that a large space was enveloped in total darkness. The travellers, however, scarcely gazed out on the grand scene before them, but throwing themselves partially dressed on their beds, were soon, as we have said before, in the land of dreams.

About the middle of the night, some dark forms might have been seen creeping along the plateau towards the house. One by one they issued from the shadow of some tall pine

trees that grew a short distance off, crossed the patch of light, and then plunged into the shade of the inn. About thirty came in this stealthy manner, and then a low whispering might have been heard. In about ten minutes one of the outhouses of the *auberge* shot up with a bright blaze, and the whole place around was illuminated.

The house was soon aroused, and the flames quickly spread to the building itself, but as often as the frightened inmates came rushing out into the night, they were seized and made prisoners by the bandits. The three friends and their servants were the last to rush out, fully armed. Dashing out into the midst of the astonished robbers, five of them made a tremendous resistance, the sixth took advantage of the darkness of the night and fled. He was the servant who had betrayed them.

They could not, however, long continue so

unequal a combat. The superior numbers of the bandits soon overcame them, and after severely wounding several of their enemies, and having become weak from loss of blood, they sank down. Bound with cords they were placed on the backs of mules which the bandits had taken out of the stables; and Cantalija after letting the master of the inn go, as also the rest of the travellers, set out with his prize towards the mountain fastness.

During the whole duration of the darkness they went on silently. Many a time when the mules tottered on the brink of some steep precipice, the horror of their helpless position was fully apparent. But the sure footed beasts seemed to watch carefully over their own safety, if not over that of their burdens, and they arrived just as day dawned at the place where the bandit held law at defiance. The opening of the cave could not be seen from

the road, but a large tree cast across a deep fissure in the rock indicated the place where they where to stop.

As the mules could not traverse so fragile a bridge, the prisoners were made to descend, and marched across between files of robbers. On turning a sharp angle of the rock a large cavern could be descried, or at least the entrance to one, into which the captives were hurried. In consideration of their having been so unceremoniously disturbed, they were ushered politely into an inner room—if room it could be called—and left to themselves. Owing to their long ride and the little rest they had been enabled to snatch at the inn, they were soon asleep, in spite of their unfortunate position.

Meanwhile the inn of the Sierra Morena was burnt to the ground. The landlord lost no time in stating his case to the authorities, who

despatched a body of fifty men to scour the mountains. This force, however, was inadequate to the task. The brigands defended themselves with wonderful courage, and as no means of crossing the gully were found, the soldiers had to retreat baffled and defeated to La Carolina.

When after the noise of this conflict had subsided, Armand inquired the reason of it, a man was sent into their room, who, they were told, would be able to explain. It was Garlitos.

“This, then, is the urgent Church business upon which you came to La Carolina,” exclaimed Dechappelle.

“You say rightly,” returned the priest, “but if you wish to know the cause of the recent struggle, I will tell you. The soldiers, who have been sent to your rescue have been driven off, and as is always the case will not

return again but leave you to your own resources."

"Your object will be defeated," said Armand, "for I have despatched a trusty messenger to the king by another route with an exposition of your villany."

This messenger was Roderigo.

The priest stared. He had not expected or provided for such an emergency.

"That will not assist you in the slightest, Senor," remarked Garlitos; "however, that is not the business upon which I wish you to speak with you, to-morrow you must prepare for a long journey."

"And whither pray are we to be taken?" cried Dechappelle.

"Into the heart of France, Senor," replied the priest. "You will then be free to go where you please."

"A very good plan, Senor," said Armand,

calmly, although enraged at the villany of his enemies. "But I have means to prevent it."

"Good morning: we start to-morrow early. We should set out at once did not the bandits desire to arrange their affairs before starting."

So saying the priest left the room, glad to escape from the power of his enraged enemy. Armand would have carried his former threat into execution had he not known that it would have been useless. The three friends spent the rest of the day in deliberating upon the plan which Armand had formed, and which they doubted not would render perfectly futile the attempts of the priest. They determined to go into France without the slightest resistance.

CHAPTER V.

It would be tedious indeed to describe the journey of the captive friends to France. It was at Montauban that they were left to themselves: as if by way of insult for their failure in the war. They did not—as they expected—meet with Father Pierre, indeed, even the Spanish priest made himself scarce as soon as possible.

In accordance with the plan they had fixed upon, Henry Beaufort and Hercule Bassompierre went on first to Paris: leaving Armand to come on leisurely after them in disguise. As they were under no interdict, they tra-

velled under their own names and together. When his friends left him, Dechapelle turned his steps towards St. Gilles, in order to see whether the cruel sentence had been carried out against his father and mother.

The cottage was there the same as ever: and much to his surprise as well as delight, his parents were there too. Roderigo had performed his mission although so young: and they had just received a letter from one of the king's ministers, saying that they might reside in France until further notice. The same missive, however, contained these words
* * * "If, however, your son is found in France, he will know what fate to expect. It will be only tempting death to enter the kingdom."

It was with an intermingling, therefore, of joy and fear that M. and Mme. Dechapelle greeted their returning son. Although

anxious to be near him they entreated him to depart: and even offered to accompany him to a distant land. This, however, was very rarely spoken of, as they still hoped to recover their lost daughter. Armand would not even allow them to accompany him to Paris: and, indeed, when he informed them of his future line of conduct, they could not but see that it would have impeded his efforts.

Dechappelle did not long stay at St. Gilles, scarcely more than four days: and then, disguising himself well, he set out for the capital. As the little white cottage with its pretty grounds, and the group at the porch faded from his sight, he felt a sickening of the heart come over him, as if he should never behold them again. Leaving him, however, to his perils and his reflections, we must now turn to Pauline and Heloise, whom we left in Germany.

During their residence at the castle of Von Weimer the priest had remained in the neighbourhood. Though unable to prevent their escape from the mansion of the Stuttgard family it was not long before he became aware of their place of concealment. As Herman had accompanied them so far on their way he did not venture to arrest their progress: but waited until they should by some accident be placed more in his power. He was, however, soon left behind: and could only pursue them by means of the information he obtained at the different inns.

In crossing the mountains which divide that part of Germany from France a storm of the most terrible kind broke over the travellers. The tempest that flooded the Sierra Morena when Armand was passing over was but as a lake to the ocean compared with it. The horses trembled as the forked lightning

rushed down from the peaks and seemed to wreath itself round the carriage. At length overcome with terror they rushed wildly forward, nor could any effort of the driver restrain them. The road up which they were ascending was steep and narrow, but the horses seemed not to care for the tremendous work they had imposed upon themselves. Onwards they rushed, while the terrified women clung to each other as if for protection. At length upon turning a corner swiftly, the outer wheel rolled off, and the carriage dashed heavily to the ground. The horses, overcome by the shock, dropped also, while the travellers were thrown in a heap to one side of the vehicle.

It required the utmost strength of the man servant, who had been thrown off his seat and much bruised, to extricate the three women from their perilous situation. When at length

he contrived to drag them through the upper window of the carriage the rain was coming down in torrents. All hope of being able to proceed was gone, and the alarmed and bruised women looked round them, at first in vain, for a place of shelter. At length far upon the rocks at the side of the road a faint glimmer could be descried. They directed the attention of the man to it and begged him to conduct them thither.

“How can I manage about the horses, madam?” asked he. “Thieves are plentiful about here.”

“We can go ourselves, Heloise,” said Pauline, “but Pierre,” she added to the man, who was French, “how can you stay out in such a storm?”

“I can get inside the carriage, madam,” replied the man.

“It is very cold, here, Pierre, put this round your shoulders. Good night.”

So saying she gave him the warm mantle which was over her own shoulders, and putting half of Heloise's cloak around her, they proceeded with their maid servant towards the light. The path they had to traverse was dark and gloomy, but with the cheering glimmer of the lamp before them they did not feel terrified. It was but a short distance, and in a few minutes they were standing at the window from whence the light proceeded, and gazing in ere they entered.

The room was small, and its inmate evidently a hermit. Scarcely any furniture was to be seen, and the solitary was kneeling before a tall wooden cross that took up one entire side of the apartment. At the knock which Pauline gave timidly at the door he rose

slowly and opened it. Upon seeing the three women standing in the storm he bade them enter in a gentle voice, and closed the door behind them. They quickly told him the cause of their intrusion, and upon their begging to be allowed to remain until the storm abated, he pointed to an inner room and told them it was at their service. Thanking him for his kindness, they entered, and locking the door threw themselves on the hard couch of the hermit, and slept.

The inmate of the hut was an old man. Tall and majestic in figure, he possessed a kind and benevolent countenance, which had, however, at times a curious shade of sternness upon its features. He wore a long robe of black serge, confined at the waist by a rope, while his feet were bare, and his head partially shaved. His beard was long and of snowy whiteness, and his hair of the same colour.

The hut itself was formed out of bark. Being overhung by a ledge of rock it was effectually shielded from the weather; but the aspect of the room was such as to inspire all the most gloomy and melancholy feelings. The apartments were three in number. The front room, where the hermit prayed and read, was as we have said small, and contained only the large cross and a shelf of pinewood, covered with religious books; a rude stool, and a still ruder table, made by the hermit's own hands. The lamp was stuck in a niche in the wall, which faced another containing a figure of the Virgin. The second, which was given up for the use of the travellers, was smaller still than this, and contained only a pallet bed, without any other furniture. The light of day was allowed to struggle through a little window that would have disgraced a prison cell. This had also a niche over the

couch, with a figure of the Virgin. The third room was for the reception of the solitary when benighted travellers claimed his hospitality. It could scarcely, indeed, be called a room, consisting merely of an oblong cupboard, with a bench covered with a hard mattress. Here the hermit lay down to rest after having prayed for the souls of the travellers who might perish in the storm which still raged furiously without.

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN Pauline and her companions descended to where the carriage had broken down on the preceding evening they found the horses, one dead, the other shivering as if with the ague. Pierre declared that he should not be able to mend the carriage before evening, and accordingly the hermit led the remaining horse to his hut, and placed him behind it underneath the ledge of rock, where he would be more warm than in the open road. Pierre collected as much food as he could from the scanty supply the mountain afforded, and then set to work to mend the carriage.

During the day the hermit told them his story. He had been, he said, a physician, and possessed of great riches. Like most other people, he fell in love when young.

“I was twenty-two years old,” said he, “and full of all the animation, the energy, the enthusiasm of so young an age. I was loved apparently by a beautiful girl whom I had met accidentally. My wealth was great, and it was only through pure love for the profession that I practised medicine. It afforded me also something wherewith to occupy myself, and, probably had I married I should have abandoned it altogether. But she proved false, and when seemingly most attached to me was engaged to another. I am a man of strong passions—I killed my rival. I felt a hatred for all mankind, and I retired here when but twenty-three to avoid the detested race and expiate my horrible crime. I am now seventy. Here

have I dwelt for forty-seven years, and have, I trust, during that long period atoned for my sin. Young lady," he added, gazing at Pauline, "you seem unhappy; relieve your mind of its burden, and if I can assist you I will."

Pauline told him the greater part of her story, but she knew not with whom she had to deal. Forty seven years had steeled his heart against all affection, and he beheld in her only a rebellious daughter of the Church. He did not however give vent to his feelings, although when he learned that Father Pierre was pursuing them, he suffered a slight smile to pass over his face. During the day the carriage was fully prepared and secreted as well as possible, for Pauline insisted on Pierre's sleeping during the night in the hermit's front room. The solitary, however, gave him up his bed, saying that he intended to sit up that night.

When all the travellers were in their rooms the hermit locked their doors on the outside, and sat down to read some monkish volume, fully persuaded that what he was about to do was for the good of the Church and his own soul.

He was going to betray them!

Father Pierre well knew the habits of the hermits, and when, therefore, he came to the scene of the late catastrophe and saw the glimmer of the solitary's lamp, he turned his horse's head up the little pathway leading to the hut. He inferred that from his proximity to the high road he might gain information with respect to the travellers who had passed by. He never imagined that his prey was so nearly within his grasp. He entered the cell without ceremony, and asked immediately the questions he wished answered as no time was to be lost.

The hermit drew him inside and pointing to the inner room said,

“Are you in search of two young ladies who have escaped from a convent?”

Father Pierre's eyes glistened with intense delight as he answered eagerly—

“I am; have you them staying here?”

The solitary then related the incidents of the preceding day, and offered to give the ladies up if they were really those he was in search of. So eager was the priest to have them once more in his power that he wished to disturb them instantly, but this the hermit would not allow, as they had had so little rest.

On the following morning, however, the ladies were let out of the room. Nothing could exceed their astonishment, their terror, their despair upon finding themselves once

more in the hands of the unscrupulous priest. They begged and entreated the hermit not to let them be taken away, they called aloud to Pierre, their servant, for help, but he could not force himself out of his narrow sleeping room, although he kicked and dashed himself against the door. M. de St. Denis had a servant with him, so that even if he had escaped they would have been a match for him.

The horses were harnessed to the carriage, the three women placed in it, and away they drove. The countenance of the priest as he sat by the side of the servant-maid was expressive of triumph and contentment, and he even spoke kindly to his captives under the influence of his success.

On reaching France they shaped their course for Poitou. A dim preception of what was about to happen crossed Pauline's mind and

she hastened to inquire of the priest his intentions.

“Whither are we going,” said she to him, as they dashed rapidly along.

“To St. Eustace,” he answered quietly, “where you ought always to have remained.”

“But St. Eustace was burnt down in the late war,” said Heloise.

“True,” replied the priest, “but it has been rebuilt since then, and is now, as before, under the superintendence of Sister Emilie. Once there you will never again escape.”

As the convent walls once more came in sight, the feelings of the two girls gave vent to themselves in a passionate flood of tears, and as the abbess greeted them in a triumphant voice, their grief was too great to be expressed in words. When the convent gates closed behind them, they felt alone in the world. St. Eustace was much changed. Its

form was entirely different to that of its predecessor. The castellated towers had given place to a plain walled house built round a square court-yard. The grove was still attached, but instead of the ramparts, Pauline and Heloise had to walk in the stone-yard among all the other sisters. Very few of their old companions were left—those who had been released by Armand Dechapelle had never returned, but others had supplied their places.

“Madame,” said Pauline to the abbess, when talking to her on the subject of their escape, “it will be quite useless for M. de St. Denis to detain myself and Heloise at St. Eustace. I am, as well as Mdlle. Dechapelle, a Protestant, and no earthly means can ever make me turn from my religion. You may keep me here, but I shall never take the veil.”

“M. de St. Denis, I do not doubt, has his

reasons for sending you here," replied Sister Emilie; "he places you and Mdlle. Heloise under my care, and my duty is to take care of you, and see that you are here when he demands you at my hands. He told me he did not desire to make you take the veil, but merely to keep you here until some future time."

"Very well, madame," said Mdlle. Lefevre, "I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that you know all the circumstances of our captivity in this wicked place; I shall, therefore, draw up a petition to the King, saying that myself and my friend are kept here against our will. As we are Protestants it will bring a strong punishment on your heads."

As Pauline finished these words, something like a smile passed over Sister Emilie's face which the young girl noticed.

"You may strive to prevent my doing so,

madame," she exclaimed; "but some time or another the King *shall* hear of it, and your punishment will come."

So saying she left the room, followed by Heloise.

CHAPTER VII.

ABOUT the beginning of October, 1621, the Hotel Royale, Rue Luxembourg, Paris, exhibited an unusual degree of bustle and excitement. Waiters were rushing hither and thither; the best suite of apartments was being got ready; various new articles of furniture were being set in order; while two gentlemen, who gave their names as Senor Pablo Gonzales and Senor Pedro de Mendibil, were giving their orders and directing the various operations of the servants.

The reason for all this excitement admits of an easy explanation. The two Spanish

gentlemen above-named had brought word that a Spanish nobleman of high rank would arrive in the course of a fortnight. During the whole of that period the bustle had been continual, particularly as they paid for everything in advance, and in the most liberal style. The first of October was the day on which he was expected to arrive; and at one o'clock everything was ready for his reception.

At two o'clock a carriage with four horses came dashing up the street—drew up with a rush at the entrance of the hotel—the servants ran out, opened the door, and out stepped Don Juan de Castro. He welcomed his two friends cordially, and immediately retired to his apartment. He stayed in his suite of rooms a whole week and nobody knew why he came—who he was, or in fact, anything about him.

“Who is the Spanish gentleman who is

staying at the Hotel Royale?" asked many a person of the waiters.

"I am sure I don't know," was the invariable reply, "he always pays his bill, is liberal to the servants, and, in fact, is a very good man; but I don't know why he has come to Paris."

At length, when curiosity among high and low was the greatest, it was rumoured that the Spanish hidalgo was about to give a grand ball. Even the nobility were not slow in showing their desire to be invited; and many called upon him to pay their respects for no other reason. The aristocracy are always actuated by anger and ill-feeling towards any new grandee who eclipses them: and several went in order that, if they were not asked, they might be able to say they had refused: he was but a vulgar person, and it would have been a disgrace to be seen there.

But such as thought this were disappointed. Don Juan de Castro possessed the most refined and polished manners—spoke French “like a native”—and was cordial and hearty to all. The magnificence of his rooms; the taste displayed in their decoration; the evident opulence and profuse expenditure of their inmate surprised them, and excited, in many, great envy.

Very few of the nobility were disappointed. As many as his vast rooms could hold with comfort he invited: and, strange to say, not a single member of the court was omitted—not even the king himself. The entire court determined to go, and several of them tried to persuade the king to go also. But he refused: and even seemed indignant at being invited.

Even the *blasé* courtiers looked forward to this entertainment with impatience. They

had also a kind of fear in their hearts that his reception would eclipse all their own: but with the young beauties and elegants of the court the general feeling was pleasure. Ludicrous were the shifts of the poorer nobility to trick themselves out for the occasion. It was rumoured that one old lord mortgaged a house and grounds to provide a carriage and dress for himself and family.

It was at the end of October that the entertainment was given. The carriages blocked up the street; and a vast crowd would have assembled had not the gendarmes prevented the people stopping. The largest room was devoted to the dancers—another large apartment was set apart for cards, chess, and other games which Don Juan knew the French to be fond of. It was a scene of uninterrupted pleasure and good humour. The host was agreeable; the guests pleased; everything

went off in the most agreeable manner possible: and when the carriages rolled back in the grey of the morning, the courtiers did not regret this breach of custom when it was repaid by such courtesy and such enjoyment.

Would they have said this?—but we must not anticipate.

A few days after this Armand Dechapelle was sitting with Roderigo in a cabaret in the Rue St. Peres.

“So you performed your mission without much trouble?” said the former.

“No, Senor, not without trouble: but I do not mind trouble for you.”

“You did not, of course, see the king himself?” enquired Armand.

“No; I was introduced to the Comte de la Roche, who, I understand, is in the King’s confidence. He said that he had no doubt his royal master would take the sentence off

M. Dechapelle and his wife; but as to M. Armand Dechapelle he could never be treated as other than a traitor and a rebel."

"Ah, indeed! Well, and I suppose he advised me not to enter France?"

"Yes," replied the boy; "he said 'to enter France is danger—to enter Paris is death.'"

"And yet I am not dead yet!" exclaimed Armand laughing, "nor am I likely to be as far as relates to the King. But did he say no more?"

"He said that as to what regarded M. de St. Denis, he suspected anything against him to be merely a libel, and that it would only increase your danger to speak ill of him."

"Was there any mention of his being rewarded for his services?" enquired Dechapelle.

"Yes, he muttered something about 'a cardinal;' but you know I don't understand

French perfectly, and Monsieur's Spanish was so bad that I couldn't understand him at all in that language."

"To return, however, to what we were before talking about—do you think you would know Madame Lambert if you saw her?"

"Yes," answered Roderigo, eagerly, "I could distinguish her face from a thousand; it is so good—so kind—so gentle."

"And Madame Semplere, the nurse—do you know her?"

"I know her face, but I cannot tell where she lives."

"Then our search will be useless, unless we know her address, we can never hope to find out what we seek."

"Madame Lambert may know," replied the boy; "I think, indeed, she does, for I re-

member her saying one day that she could always find her, the wicked woman."

"In that case it is all right again," said M. Dechappelle. "M. de St. Denis, I shall yet be even with you!"

CHAPTER VIII.

FATHER PIERRE having accomplished the object of his travels, and having apparently defeated all the projects of his adversaries, came up to the capital full of high ambition and dauntless impudence. Once more Pauline and Heloise were in his power, and Armand, he fondly hoped, was in durance vile, or very near it. The house belonging to M. Lefevre had been rebuilt, and the rent of that and the others, which, according to him, had been left to the church, brought him a comfortable income; very comfortable indeed

when added to the revenue he derived from his office of priest.

It was a mystery how M. de St. Denis managed to be always rushing about hither and thither, serving nobody else's interests but his own. But so he did; and for many years it was his boast to say that he never preached a sermon or entered a church. He had heard with dismay and anger the circumstance of Armand's having come into a fortune, but as this was unavoidable, he did not suffer his mind to dwell upon it. Whenever he *did* think of it, it increased his wish for revenge, although his approaching elevation was balm to the wound. He had always a high opinion of Armand's courage, but he was unprepared for an incident that occurred soon after his arrival in Paris.

He was walking along the Boulevards, gazing benignantly on all around. No one at

that moment was farther from his thoughts than Armand Dechapelle. He was thinking of the time not far distant when he should be rolling along that street in his carriage, looking with contempt at his enemies and all the world. Just in the midst of this dream of triumph, he came full drive against some one, and stepped back with a polite apology. Why did he turn pale? It was not fear, but sheer astonishment.

“Ah!” cried Armand Dechapelle, grasping him by the arm, “you see I am here with you. Indeed, I was before you.”

“How do you dare to come to Paris?” said the priest, as Armand forced him to take his arm.

“I have more courage, perhaps, than you, M. Favier,” replied Dechapelle, “and when I have an object I always carry it out. I have a scheme, Monsieur, now working that will

inevitably, in all human probability, bring about my wishes. Nothing but a miracle can now thwart me."

The priest stared.

"Yes," continued Armand, "I have already spoken to the King about your villany, and—"

"You have not dared to go openly to court—to see him personally!" exclaimed the astonished priest.

"Oh, no," said Dechapelle smiling, "but I sent a trusty messenger. Next time, however, if he will not hear me in that way I shall go to him myself."

"But you are forbidden on pain of death to enter France," returned St. Denis.

"No matter for that; I shall see him myself and expose your villany. I suppose you have heard of Madame Lambert?"

"Yes—that is, no—no!" exclaimed the priest, turning pale.

“And probably I shall receive the same answer when I enquire whether you are acquainted with a certain nurse named Semplere?”

“Yes, certainly,” said M. de St. Denis, “I know of no such persons—”

“Then I shall have to refresh your memory shortly by bringing them before you. However, if you like, we will now go to see Roderigo Alvarez, whom probably it is so long since you have seen, that you have forgotten him too.”

“I am in a hurry,” cried the priest; “I will not go.”

“But you *shall*,” said Armand, giving him a grasp that made him shrink; “you *shall*, and now directly.”

“I will make the first gendarme I meet take you!” cried St. Denis, furious with rage.

“You dare not,” said Armand, in a whisper that made him tremble.

The unwilling and alarmed priest was hurried on until they reached the café in the Rue de St. Peres, where Armand had met Roderigo before. Dechapelle entered a private room, where sat Alvarez.

When he had locked the door, Armand said,—

“Is this the man?”

“Yes,” cried the boy vehemently, “it is he —I will swear to him.”

The priest seemed violently agitated, but murmured to himself, “Thank heaven he does not know it.”

He then said aloud, “There is sufficient of this farce: let me go now.”

“Once more, and for the last time, M. de St. Denis,” said Armand, “I offer you peace.”

“Never!” cried Father Pierre.

“Then it is war; and it shall be war until one of us is ruined. When I say a thing I mean it.”

The priest seemed much agitated, but rose to go; and as he was passing out of the door Armand seized hold of his arm saying—

“Stay, Monsieur, I forgot to thank you for your kindness in bringing me to my original destination free of expense. I owe you much gratitude for this, for from La Carolina on the other side of the Sierra to Montauban in Guienne, I did not spend a centime.”

The priest cast a furious look at him and departed. To lose no time he went immediately to the Palace: and entreated to speak with the King. Although Louis XIII. was playing a game of chance with the Comte de la Roche, he left it upon hearing the name of

his visitor, and bade him be brought to his private room.

"Sire," said M. de St. Denis, when they were alone, "the traitor, Dechapelle, is now in Paris. I have met him and spoken to him."

"Why did you not instantly have him arrested?" cried the King. "The villanous traitor: thus to insult my orders."

"He threatened me with instant assassination if I tried to do so!" returned the ready-tongued priest.

"I will have Paris searched from one end to another," cried the King, pacing to and fro. "Do you know where he is to be found?"

"He forced me into a place in the Rue de St. Peres," answered M. de St. Denis, "which I could readily find again. I had very important business to transact, but I

hastened to tell your Majesty before I went about my own affairs."

"Thank you," replied the King. "No mercy shall be shown him—the traitor!"

Seeing that there was no chance of the monarch's coming to the subject which he was anxious to speak about, namely, his own advancement, Father Pierre soon left. The King was in a towering passion: and sent out the most rigorous orders. He little imagined the plan which his enemy was engaged in carrying out—he never would have believed that he himself would be outwitted.

CHAPTER IX.

WHEN M. de St. Denis left Armand and Roderigo in the café, they quitted the house soon after him and proceeded to Madame Lambert. She was the inmate of a neatly furnished suite of two apartments looking out upon the Seine. She was a lady of some fifty years; of plain countenance, but a pleasant expression playing over her face made it even more agreeable than beauty. She seemed much affected at the sight of Roderigo.

“Why, Roderigo,” cried she, “you have grown so tall and so handsome since I last

saw you, that I should scarcely have known you. If I remember rightly, you were scarcely half your present height when the priest fetched you away."

"No, aunt," said Alvarez, for by that name he had been accustomed to call her, "but I have come with this gentleman not only to see you, but to ask you for some information about my mother."

Madame Lambert now for the first time noticed the presence of Armand. When introduced to him she said that she would rather speak to him alone. Roderigo, therefore, withdrew, and the old lady came at once to the point.

"As M. de St. Denis is no friend of mine," she said, "I will tell exactly the state of the case. Father Pierre married when he was very young and had one child, Roderigo. The name of his wife was Marie Dufour; she was

a beautiful woman, but the villain thought more of his own advancement than of the happiness or even the life of his wife. Being offered by a friend a rich priestship, he begged and entreated his wife to live apart from him and pretend not to be married to him; she would not however consent. What was to be done? Should he abandon forever the chance of rising to the office of cardinal? No, he did not like to sacrifice his son, and accordingly he gave him into my charge, calling him an orphan in whom he had an interest. The real story soon came out, and he confessed that it was his son. Meanwhile, however, his wife was taken suddenly ill: a doctor procured by himself was called in. Madame Semplere was installed as nurse: and in a few weeks all was over with his poor Marie. For the sake of the son I have never disclosed the fact to any one, but if he has again commenced his course

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of wickedness, and is striving to injure anyone, I am ready to assist in his punishment."

"In that case, Madame," replied Armand, "you will now be ready to act as you say. My story is as full of horror as your own."

He then related the whole series of Father Pierre's iniquities, and immediately enlisted the old lady's sympathies on his side. Although Madame Lambert did not desire to tell Roderigo the story of his father's crimes, Armand determined at once what course to pursue. He did not think it right, however wicked the parent, to induce the son to stand up as a witness against him, and thanking the good old lady he departed, after learning Madame Semplere's address, and getting Madame Lambert to sign her name to an account of the transaction.

"Roderigo," said he as they walked towards the Rue de St. Peres, "I shall no longer ask

you to witness anything against M. de St. Denis. Indeed in any cause you never shall."

"Why," exclaimed Roderigo vehemently, "he is a murderer, a villain."

"Yes, but he is your father," returned Armand.

The boy clasped his arms as if his nails would have entered the flesh, and said in a low voice:

"For Heaven's sake, M. Armand, do not say such an awful thing. You cannot mean it."

"It is true, Roderigo," replied Dechapelle, "and therefore your name is St. Denis, or rather Favier."

"But M. de St. Denis is a priest," cried the boy growing pale.

"Yes, but he married before entering the Church."

"Though he is my father, he is a wicked man."

I do not hate him now nor will speak against him to any one. But he is a wicked man."

"I am glad you speak as you do," said Armand, "I would not for the world allow you to witness anything against your father. But I cannot cease my prosecution of him, as the happiness of my whole life, the happiness of myself, my father, my mother, my sister, Madlle. Lefevre, my friend Hercule, depend upon my success."

"But do you think he will not find out the scheme?" asked Roderigo.

"No, not unless you tell him. Without that it is almost impossible. However, I have one thing more to say to you. If you prefer going to live with your father to staying with me, I will not detain you, but you must first promise never to reveal my secret."

"Never will I reveal to any living soul anything to harm you," said the boy with

tears in his eyes, "not even to my father, for it was through you that I know what I now am, and have escaped from the life of a pirate. If you can succeed without ruining my father, pray do not pursue him any longer."

"Roderigo," returned Armand firmly, "I have a duty to perform, and I shall perform it in spite of every one. Your father must be taught the error of his ways, but trust me I shall do what is right."

Roderigo said no more; but inwardly he was praying that no harm might befall his father. He had been so long without a natural friend in the world that he clung to his newly-found parent, wicked as he was, with an eagerness that surprised Armand.

"Do you think I shall find my father at the café, Monsieur?" asked he.

"I should think not, but you may. However, I shall be able to take you to him, I do

not doubt. Now we must separate as usual. Take care of yourself."

They walked in opposite directions, and reached their places of residence by different routes, to avoid suspicion. When Roderigo entered his room he locked himself in, and throwing himself on the bed, wept long and bitterly.

"I have found a father," thought he, "but oh! what a father. A man stained with my mother's blood, with the blood of M. Lefevre, and perhaps worse. And yet I feel my heart yearn towards him. Perhaps when he knows who I am he may repent and become once more good."

The boy never imagined that M. de St. Denis knew well who he was and would not recognise him.

By the discovery he had just made Armand's plans were much disturbed, but still

he could not consent to the idea of making the son a witness against the father. Madame Semplere and Madame Lambert were sufficient witnesses. The signature of the former to the account of the murder was obtained upon a promise of her being held innocent. She was advised to change her name for the present, and to live in as obscure a lodging as possible.

CHAPTER X.

As Armand was walking with Hercule and Henry Beaufort along one of the streets of Paris, he came unexpectedly upon an old friend, in the shape of Alphonse de St. Martin. A lady of extreme beauty was leaning on his arm, and as he introduced her as his wife, a smile of unmistakeable happiness passed over both their faces.

“You must come with us, my friends,” said Alphonse, “we have much mutual explanation to make.”

They proceeded in a body to the place of St. Martin’s residence. He was evidently rich,

as the furniture and the general air of the apartments denoted. What was still more unmistakeable, and still more pleasing was the fact that they were happy. The wife, as may be inferred, was Claudine D'Aubigny. They had met again in Paris, and as Claudine had no one's consent to ask but her own, there was no delay in their marriage. She brought Alphonse a moderate fortune, derived partly from the estates in Orleanois which had been now restored to her.

"I am going to have a re-union to-morrow evening or the next day. It shall be as you please," said Alphonse, "whichever suits you best."

"One is as as agreeable to me as the other," returned Armand.

"I shall," said St. Martin, "be able to introduce you to an old acquaintance of yours, Madame Dupont."

“I do not know such a person,” exclaimed Armand.

“Oh yes you do. She remembers you very well at any rate. I never could get out of her where you met, but she has met you.”

“I shall know her by sight I have no doubt,” answered Armand, “and as I am impatient to know who it can possibly be, perhaps we will meet to-morrow evening.”

Thus it was agreed, and at seven o'clock a small party was assembled at the house of Alphonse de St. Martin. Among others Armand recognised the face of Emilie, the turnkey's supposed daughter, whom he had conducted to her aunt's on the night of his escape from prison. She immediately recognised him.

“Ah! Monsieur Dechapelle,” cried she, “you will now remember my words and see

the truth of them. I told you your enterprise could never succeed."

"You said rightly," answered Armand, "but if it did not it was not through any fault of yours. For the aid you gave me, I shall ever be grateful."

"I ought to be grateful to you, Monsieur Dechapelle," said Emilie, "for it was through you that I obtained my excellent husband."

"Through me!" exclaimed he with surprise.

"Yes; had I not through you assistance escaped to my aunt's I should not have been in time to see M. Dupont."

"Alphonse was telling me that he was going to introduce me to Madame Dupont, an old friend, and I could not imagine whom he meant. But I am glad if I was of any service to you."

At that moment Alphonse came up.

"Ah, Armand," said he, "you and Madame Dupont are on good terms I see, and do not need any introduction from me."

"Yes, but I did not know Madame Dupont under that name. To this lady Alphonse I owe my life. Sit down and let me tell you."

Emilie laughed heartily at Armand's earnestness in telling the story, but it was with a serious countenance that he related the events of that night, the horrors of the dungeons of the Conciergerie, and the flight from Paris.

During the course of the evening Armand detailed to Alphonse his plan of operation, at the ingeniousness of which he was as much surprised as he was alarmed by its boldness.

"If it is found out," said he, "you will have made many enemies."

"I shall, but the prize is worth the trial.

You know the boy of whom I spoke in my letters to you; he is Father Pierre's son."

Alphonse laughed.

"The old villain," cried he, "but you will expose him of course."

"It was a lawful marriage," answered De-chapelle, "contracted before he entered the priesthood, but what will ruin him is this."

He then related the circumstances attending the death of Marie de St. Denis, and was in the middle of his narrative when a loud and peremptory knock was heard at the door; Armand turned pale.

"The priest has found out I am here," whispered he to Alphonse, "prevent the porter's going to the door."

St. Martin rushed rapidly down the stairs, and was just in time to stay the concierge who was emerging from his little room. He explained to him the state of the case: and

as he was friendly to the man, the latter ascended the steps with him.

“I cannot long refuse to answer the summons,” said he. “Besides, you are not sure that it is the person you fear.”

“We can easily ascertain that. Stay here a moment, and I will go and look out of my window.”

Alphonse re-entered his apartment, and throwing open the casement gently, gazed out. A body of gendarmes, about six in number, stood round the door, with a gentleman at their head. There was no mistaking that person's figure, it was M. de St. Denis. The knocking now became more peremptory than ever. Many people, attracted by the sight of the police, crowded round the door, and it was evident that something must be done to effect Armand's escape. He imme

diately remembered that he had once chanced to elude his pursuers by running along the tops of the houses: but there was no outlet in the house. What was to be done? The knocking became louder, and the voices of the gendarmes angry. Not a moment was to be lost, for they were heard threatening to break down the door.

The concierge hit upon a plan. He would pretend to be asleep—would come down half dressed, and place Armand behind the door. This was a dangerous plan but the only one. With a beating heart Dechapelle descended the stairs and placed himself behind the great door of the house. After a minute or so the porter came down also, rubbing his eyes and yawning as if just disturbed.

The gendarmes, headed by Father Pierre entered, and without shutting the door de-

clared that he was empowered to search the house.

“Very well, Monsieur,” yawned the concierge, “very well.”

They entered one by one, and in the uncertain light did not distinguish Armand. The man had purposely omitted to bring a light; and as the last gendarme entered Dechapelle slipped behind him, and slamming the door rushed out into the night. The people assembled, made way for him: he rushed into a narrow passage on the other side, and was soon lost in the vast network of the metropolis.

When far beyond reach of the followers of the priest, he walked leisurely towards his home. In the meantime the gendarmes knew by the slamming of the door that their intended prisoner had escaped; and rushing out

dispersed in all directions. But even this small delay proved fatal to their enterprise, and they returned disappointed to the enraged and discomfited priest. The poor porter was arrested, but discharged afterwards as innocent.

CHAPTER XI.

HENRY BEAUFORT received in a few days after a letter from England, entreating him to return home. He had, it appeared, engaged himself to a lady before his departure for France: and though, like Armand, he had forgotten his betrothed for a while, he now felt every desire to re-visit his native land and claim his bride. Here, then, was a dilemma. Armand wished to have two gentlemen to be always with him: but this was at length made right by Alphonse de St. Martin, who declared himself ready to be of service to him.

It was a sorrowful parting that took place between Beaufort and his three friends. It always excites grief in our breasts to part with those we love, or those whom we feel an interest in, be the period of their absence ever so short. The thought always presents itself—shall we ever see them again? To me it is sad to part with friends even for a month. But to Beaufort, who never expected to return to France, and to Armand, Hercule, and Alphonse, who never were to visit England in all human probability, parting was a circumstance productive of much grief.

When the diligence that conveyed the jovial, good-hearted, generous Englishman towards the north dashed away amid clouds of dust from the court yard of the inn at Paris, his friends stood gazing after him for some time. They had laughed and grieved together; they had fought side by side; they

had aided one another in trouble. Why, then, need I pause ere I write it?—Armand brushed away a tear from his eyes as he turned homewards. As if by mutual assent they did not speak of the subject, but dropped off one by one until Roderigo found himself unaccountably alone.

Having nothing else to do at the time, he sauntered slowly out of Paris, and made for the Bois de Boulogne. He eluded the people—few, indeed, they were—who were strolling amid the trees, and, sitting down on the roots of an old elm, drew out a book and began reading. He had not long been there ere a slight rustling amid the fallen leaves of autumn made him raise his head. It was Father Pierre. Dropping the book from his hands, Roderigo sprang forward, and throwing his arms about his neck, cried—

“Father!”

The old man seemed much moved, a tear stood in his eye as he pressed the boy to his breast, saying—

“My son, how do you know this?”

Roderigo picked up his book calmly, and taking M. de St. Denis’ arm, walked with him towards Paris. When all the circumstances of his late life had been related to the priest, the latter said—

“Can you tell me, my son, where M. Armand Dechapelle is now living?”

This cunning and sudden appeal almost took Roderigo off his guard, but he quickly answered—

“Father, I owe all—even my life to M. Dechapelle, and therefore I can never reveal anything that will in any way injure him.”

“Why do you think it will injure him to tell me?” asked the priest in a forced calm voice.

"Because M. Armand told me so; and, besides, I have made a solemn promise not to do so. You ought to be grateful to him, father," added Roderigo, "for he never tried to induce me to witness against you."

"Against me!" cried M. de St. Denis, astonished at hearing such a speech from his son.

"Yes," said Roderigo, "about my mother."

"I must take him away from that wretch," muttered the priest, "or he will turn even my son against me." He added aloud, "Would you mind coming to live with me, Roderigo?"

"No, father; if you wish it, I should like it very much. But you would let me visit M. Armand, would you not?"

"Oh, yes, certainly," replied his father, who instantly determined to have him followed on one of these journeys.

"I must tell M. Dechappelle that I am coming to you," said Roderigo, and after embracing his father, and finding where he lived, he ran off quickly to avoid pursuit. Armand made no objection to his residing with his father. Indeed, even if he had desired it not to be so, what excuse could he make to a son for depriving him of the pleasure of seeing his father. When, however, the young St. Denis told him he intended to visit him often he begged him not to do so.

"My dear Roderigo," said he, "we must part for a while. In a short time I shall need no concealment. For the present, however, do not come to me, as you will inevitably be followed, and cause great trouble to me. Before the winter has passed I do not doubt we shall be able to be as great friends as ever."

The next day saw Roderigo installed in his new home. However glad he might be, having

found his father, and at discovering that he was evidently an object of the old man's affection, still he could not help regarding him with a kind of instinctive dread, as having caused the death of his mother.

CHAPTER XII.

AN event occurred soon after this that caused some excitement in Paris. It afforded to Armand Dechapelle a sort of triumph, for the greater would then he thought be the fall of the false priest. The murderer—the arrant knave, was raised by his intrigues to a position, the highest he could aspire to. M. de St. Denis was made a cardinal.

Meanwhile Don Juan de Castro was making his way among the nobility of France. His stay was evidently destined to be a long one, as he took the large suite of apartments for a permanency, and bought many additional

pieces of furniture. One of the gentlemen who came with him—Don Pablo Gonzales—left the Hotel Royale, while another Spaniard and his wife—Senor Andrea Zurbaran—took up their quarters with him.

The new comer was invited to all the houses of any distinction in Paris; the nobles vied with each other who should give him the best reception, and never omitted an occasion of visiting him. Calculating mothers brought their marriageable and unmarried daughters. But though the Spaniard took notice of them,—flattered the pretty and the plain alike indiscriminately, and set many mothers' hearts beating, still he appeared to fix his attention on none.

The King seeing the manner in which Don Juan de Castro was received by all the nobility, and hearing exaggerated accounts of his vast riches and boundless hospitality, began

to consider whether it was advisable entirely to exclude him from the palace. His friend and private counsellor, the Count de la Roche, was consulted on the subject.

“Count,” said the king, when the courtier entered his private room, “I have been thinking whether it would be advisable for me to invite the Don Juan de Castro to the palace?”

“Sire,” replied the count, “I cannot advise your Majesty. I am almost the only one of your courtiers who has not gone to his house. I cannot, therefore, say what kind of person he is.”

“Do you think that I could go to his reunions without being recognised?” continued the monarch.

“Yes, sire,” said De la Roche. “I will procure a disguise, and when I am invited I will take you with me as a friend.”

“Agreed,” replied Louis, evidently pleased at the prospect of an escape from court routine. —“I hope the Don will soon be in a hospitable mood, that I may enjoy a little new recreation.”

The count had barely time to explain his project when the Cardinal de St. Denis was announced. The King smiled, and bidding the count good morning gave orders for the new comer to be brought in. The priest entered in all the pomp of his new dignity, but still bowed lowly to the monarch, who received him cordially.

“Well, Cardinal,” cried Louis, “I trust that your new power will enable you to find the traitor, Dechapelle. What could have induced him to come to Paris to brave so much danger?”

“He comes, sire,” said the priest, “on purpose to show his contempt for the laws. I

am making strenuous endeavours to find him."

"I have never thought of it before, Cardinal," continued the King, "but now I remember it, I will ask you. I received a letter from him stating that if I gave him an audience he could tell me some facts relative to you which would induce me for ever to withdraw my favour from you. He said that you were going to bring him into the middle of France, or at least he suspected so, and there leave him, in order that he might be arrested and executed for disobedience to the law. He also stated that a sister of his, and a young lady in whom he took an interest, were forcibly detained by you either in some foreign country or at a convent named St. Eustace; that you had caused the death of two persons to his knowledge, and he only demanded an audience in order to prove such to be the case."

During this long speech of the King, Cardinal St. Denis had several times endeavoured to speak, but by a wave of the hand he was bade be silent. Even his imperturbable *sang froid* was slightly disturbed by the apparent earnestness of the monarch, and the scrutinising eye that watched him made the colour slightly leave his cheek. He soon, however, regained his self possession, and replied—

“Sire, if you were to believe every idle tale, you would in a short time be so overwhelmed with letters, and petitions, and impostures of all sorts, that you would not know where to turn.”

This did not satisfy the King, who again said—

“But is it true that you have done this? Is any part of the story true?”

“No, not a syllable,” returned the priest, who saw that a bold lie was the only escape;

"it is a false tale: be not persuaded to see the traitor, he may have some horrible design—perhaps even against your life."

"Not so," said Louis XIII., "he was always a brave and generous enemy; he would never even dream of assassination. If I do not see him it will not be for that reason—it will be from no fear of harm to myself. But to turn from Dechappelle, Cardinal, have you been invited to Don Juan de Castro's reunion?"

"No, sire," replied the priest, glad to escape from a subject which he dreaded, "but I hope to be soon. All the nobility are going, and as I hear he is a Catholic he will not omit me, I dare say."

The monarch smiled at this piece of conceit, and answered—

"I shall invite him to the palace soon, and perhaps shall go myself to his residence to see what sort of person he is. But you are

mistaken about his religion—he is a strict Protestant.”

The priest stared.

“Then I have no chance of going to his house,” cried he in a disappointed tone.

“Oh, yes,” said the King, “I have been invited, and all my courtiers, and why should you be excluded?”

As the Cardinal rolled back to his apartments in his dashing carriage, he reflected long and deeply on what the King had said to him. He dreaded the consequence of an interview between Dechapelle and Louis, for what would be the end of his career, were the document signed by Madame Lambert and Madame Semplere to fall into his hands? His enmity—his desire for vengeance now burnt more fiercely than ever; and as his large resources enabled him to do so, he had his spies in all directions.

The King on the other hand had his suspicions slightly aroused by the priest's manner in his conversation with him. He could not, however, retract his favour so quickly, and besides, as the Pope had raised him to the high office of cardinal, he became a dangerous enemy.

One thing, however, spoke in the priest's favour—if Dechapelle had been brought forcibly into France, why did he come and remain voluntarily in Paris?

“However, be it as it may,” thought Louis, “if I can see Monsieur Dechapelle I will, and he shall go and come in safety.”

The King had more faith than was justifiable in the character he had attained for generosity and good faith among his subjects. He little thought that Armand Dechapelle would as soon have trusted a hired assassin as his monarch. The Count de la Roche was

dispatched to the house of the Cardinal to inform him it was the King's pleasure that if he met Armand he should bid him come to the Palace; that there he would be in perfect safety, and that Louis XIII. was ready at any moment to grant him the interview he desired.

CHAPTER XIII.

It was winter once more, and the dark night had fallen over the city of Paris. The snow covered the ground, the sides of the bridges, and the roofs of the tall houses. It stood in eddies against the fronts of some of the buildings, and half encircled the lamp posts and the monuments. The sky was now clear, a sharp frost had set in, and the moon—cold but intensely bright—shone down upon the bustling city. Although late at night the capital presented a lively scene: carriages were hurrying rapidly onwards through the streets, and all apparently in the same direction.

The point of attraction was the house of Don Juan de Castro.

A grand masked ball was taking place there, to which all the nobility, as well as many wealthy citizens, were invited. Among the last carriages that arrived was a small closed conveyance, from which alighted two gentlemen. The one who walked slightly in advance of the other was a man of apparently proud demeanour, although his black domino prevented his features from being seen. He was attired in the dress of a knight of the olden time, although the armour, which appeared so weighty, was of very light materials. His attendant was dressed as his squire.

When he entered the apartment where the guests were assembled, his appearance produced some little excitement. His manner was so haughty, and his walk so imperious,

that his squire drew him on one side and whispered—

“If your majesty will allow me to speak I would give your majesty a word of my thoughts.”

“Speak, de la Roche,” replied the King with a slight laugh, “and do not be so humble as if you were in reality my squire.”

“Do not walk quite so majestically nor appear so haughty, or your rank will be suspected,” whispered the Count.

“Right, your counsel is good, I will follow it,” and the King turned to gaze at the scene.

Don Juan de Castro had removed from his hotel, and taken a large house near the palace of the Tuileries. The room in which the ball was going on was immense both in size and height. Four brilliant chandeliers hung from the vaulted ceiling, statues standing in niches

of the wall held candles in their hands, while wreaths of bright flowers encircled their heads. Persons apparently from all nations of the earth moved about in the gay dance, here a little group stood talking earnestly, there couples walked up and down whispering in each other's ears.

There was another person among the crowd, distinct from the rest both in form and manner. He was a man of little above the middle height, rather stout and dressed as a pilgrim with scrip and staff. He appeared, however, a monk or a penitent, who was very well satisfied with himself. No sign of bad feeling or long and painful journeys was to be marked in his figure. The King knew him in a moment in spite of his mask, and slipping his arm in his drew him on one side.

"Ah, Cardinal," said Louis in a suppressed tone, "you have chosen a quaint dress. But

you perceive that I recognised you in spite of it."

"Yes, sire," answered St. Denis, "but have you seen our host yet."

"No, I should much like to do so; but I must not be known to be here in my own person. I am the Marquis de Mont Marin for to-night. Next time we meet I will come under my own name."

At this moment a man approached them dressed in the habit of a Spanish bandit with a domino, which covered the whole of his face.

"That is Don Juan," whispered the pilgrim, and advancing towards the Spaniard he begged him to be introduced to the Marquis de Mont Marin.

"It is not usual for maskers to be introduced to each other," replied he, "but still I do not mind."

He was accordingly made acquainted with

the King under his assumed name, and passing his arm into that of the monarch's he led him to an adjacent apartment where some gentlemen were engaged in play. The room was much smaller than that in which the dancers were assembled; round tables, and square tables were placed in different parts of it, at most of which gamers were engaged at cards all wearing their masks.

"Will you play a hand with me, Marquis," said Don Juan, "here is a spare table."

"I shall be most happy," replied the King.

And seating himself opposite De Castro, the latter drew from out a drawer a pack of cards and they commenced playing. The King won, the games got interesting, and they continued their occupation. At length by some curious freak of fortune Don Juan de Castro cleared off the stakes one after another, and his companion eyed him angrily from the opposite

side. The monarch did not mind the money but he felt vexed at being beaten, and let fall an expression which ruffled the Spaniard's pride.

"Monsieur," cried he, "I shall decline to play any more with you."

"Do you know to whom you are speaking," replied the King in a loud voice forgetting himself for the moment.

"I believe your name is le Marquis de Mont Marin," returned Don Juan, warmly; "but were you the King of France himself I should refuse to play until a proper apology had been made."

Louis XIII. recovered his self-possession in a moment and answered,—

"I was hasty, Senor: let us, however, adjourn to the hall, that there may be no chance of another misunderstanding. Your arm?"

Taking the monarch's arm, Don Juan con-

ducted him once more into the apartment, where the scene was still one of uninterrupted gaiety. Louis was far from being of the same temperament as the Haroun el Raschid of the Thousand and One Nights. He wished to be disguised and desired to be treated like a king. He no sooner met the cardinal than, drawing him aside, he said,—

“St. Denis, our host has a spirit which I do not relish. I very nearly discovered myself in my haste. Indeed, rather than he should speak to me so again, I would tell who I am.”

“That would be imprudent, Sire,” returned the Cardinal. “It is better to find out what sort of man he is before you let him know that the King of France visits him.”

If the priest had known the kind of soul which Don Juan possessed, he would have known that entertaining a king would have

made no impression on him. He was not one of those who consider it an honour—a never-to-be-forgotten honour if a monarch—a real monarch speaks to them. He was one who despised royalty both for itself and its concomitants.

“Are you so honoured by my friendship, St. Denis?” said Louis, laughing. “Methinks if I came to visit you, it would be in your eyes merely the performance of a duty on my part.”

“You do not know my character!” was all the answer vouchsafed by the priest.

“Better than you do yourself,” muttered the King without, however, being overheard; “but,” he added aloud, “I shall join the dancers in spite of my armour, or I shall be remarked.”

Louis thought that wherever he was, he was the object of all attention; but he need

not have danced against his will; for the couples were too much engaged to notice one person. The guests went away at about three o'clock in the morning well pleased with the events of the evening. The King admired the spirit of Don Juan de Castro: but determined that the next time he went he would appear in his real character, which, however, the Comte de la Roche strongly advised him against.

CHAPTER XIV.

WHEN all the guests had departed, and the halls were silent, and the lights burnt dimly, and the wreaths hung faded around the pale statues, and the city was once more quiet, a party of three gentlemen were seated in a small room in Don Juan's mansion before a blazing fire. They had thrown off their evening costume, and were dressed plainly as French gentlemen.

"Alphonse," said Don Juan de Castro—or why should we not disclose the mystery?—Armand Dechapelle—"Alphonse," he said, addressing that personage who had passed

under the name of Andre Zurbaran, while Hercule had been called Pedro de Mendibil, "the King was here to-night."

"The King!" exclaimed both at once.

"Yes, the King; and what will astonish you still more—Father Pierre, under his new title of Cardinal St. Denis."

"The next thing you will say," answered Hercule Bassompierre, "will be that you have recovered the documents, I suppose!"

"Would that I could say so!" said Armand. "But I was not suspected either by Louis or the old villain the priest. The King never imagined that he was known to me. He called me a dishonourable name and I told him that I declined to play with him longer. He lost his temper in a moment, and would have discovered himself unwittingly had I not reminded him of his situation by mentioning the King's name. He then said we had better

return to the dancers, and I never spoke to him till he went."

"Will he come again, do you think?" asked Alphonse.

"He will be sure to come again," said Dechapelle, "but what I wish to speak about is this. Although I am very rich I cannot keep this up very long. The expense is perfectly ruinous."

"It need not be kept up much longer," replied Hercule, "if the King visits you once more that is all you need."

"True: but if he refuses to come I shall put off the ball next time. The priest will be certain to arrive at the fixed hour every night I send him an invitation, so that one bird is caught."

A month almost passed away without a single incident, excepting perhaps one, which is worth recording. This was a meeting

with Father Pierre. That worthy having ridden out of Paris had alighted in the Bois de Boulogne, to take a quiet stroll. He would not allow any one to follow him in his walk but Roderigo, of whom he appeared to have become quite fond. They had hardly been there five minutes, before they saw a man approaching them, whom St. Denis the younger immediately recognised as Armand Dechappelle. The latter advanced rapidly towards them, and taking the hand of Roderigo said—

“My young friend, it is long since we met. How have you been?”

“I have been very well, Monsieur; but you do not see my father!”

Armand had not intended to speak to M. de St. Denis: but he could not well help doing so now without conveying an insult.

“I congratulate you, M. Favier,” said

Dechappelle, "on your accession to the Cardinal's hat."

"Thank you," returned the priest, eyeing him angrily, "but you had better consult your safety in flight: I have scouts in all directions."

"No doubt you take your measures well, Monsieur," said Armand, "but now you have attained to the height of your ambition, would it not be better to accept peace?"

"Dechappelle," answered the Cardinal, "let me explain to you my position. I have no particular enmity towards yourself: but as you have thwarted me and stood in my way so often, I cannot be expected to feel any friendship for you. But as for Pauline Lefevre—I have sworn never to let her escape from my power. I have my vengeance—or I perish in the attempt."

"May it be the latter!" cried Armand, "but is it justice to revenge upon Pauline her father's injuries—if there were any—towards you!"

"Justice!" exclaimed St. Denis, vehemently, "when have *I* ever received justice. Was M. Lefevre just in forcing away from me my betrothed?"

"It was in fair rivalry," replied Armand, "and—"

"Aye! that is the way you understand things: but to return to yourself, I will give you time to escape from France, if you promise never to return."

"Let me once for all explain myself," said Armand. "I never intend to leave France unless it is with Pauline. We cannot now mistake each other. You never mean to give her up—I never mean to lose her. We shall see who is the stronger. Henceforward we

meet only as enemies. As for you, Roderigo, we must part, at present for I can see you only with your father. Adieu; and remember your religion and your benefactor."

So saying, Armand walked hastily away, leaving Father Pierre in a state of great excitement.

Under the character of Don Juan de Castro Armand still was courted and flattered. He was invited to the palace more than once, but for some time Louis XIII. could not bring himself openly to visit the supposed Spaniard; he was advised by the Count de la Roche to desist from all idea of going, but the King was determined to see how he would be received in *propria personæ*.

Accordingly, when he had been invited for the twelfth time, he signified his intention, through his secretary, of visiting the Don's ball. Why he chose this is a mystery; he

had been included in those asked to the soirees private parties, &c., but he preferred the ball. Armand, however, made no more preparation on this occasion than he would have done on any common reception; the lighting was the same, the banquet the same,—the persons present the same.

At rather a late hour the King alighted from his carriage and entered the house. He was dressed plainly, without any show, but the affectation of simplicity was more obtrusive than display. He was accompanied by the Comte de la Roche and another gentleman, while the Cardinal St. Denis entered about the same time. The monarch was received by Don Juan with cordiality, but there was no place of honour for him. He was obliged to mix with the other guests, who, however, with the true obsequiousness of courtiers, made way for him wherever he

went. The heartiness of Armand's manner, however, pleased Louis, and he spent much of the evening in conversation with him.

As Armand and the King were walking up and down the saloon in the interval between two dances, he beheld the Cardinal approach him. As he did so, he saw St. Denis's eyes distended with wonder, and he stopped short. Suddenly he endeavoured to pass by the King, but by a simple manœuvre Dechapelle prevented him. The Cardinal in his imprudent way whispered in his ear—

“Villain, I have discovered you,—you are Armand Dechapelle.”

Armand grasped his arm as in a vice, and murmured in his ear—

“If you utter a single word more here, I will bury this in your heart.”

The sight of the brilliant poinard that Dechapelle half drew from his bosom, kept the

Cardinal's tongue sealed, and turning to the King Armand said—

“Excuse me, sire, for a moment. I have particular business with the Cardinal.”

“Certainly,” replied the monarch. “I hope we shall be able to finish our tête-à-tête before I depart.”

Dechapelle then took St. Denis's arm and walked away.

CHAPTER XV.

ARMAND drew the Cardinal out of the thronging ball room where a dance had again commenced: passed up the wide and handsome staircase, and entering a small room locked the door and putting the key into his pocket sat down. Making a sign for the Cardinal to do the same he said:

“So you have found me out, M. de St. Denis.”

“Yes, young gentleman, and I shall take the first opportunity of exposing your villany,” replied the Cardinal bursting with rage.

“I give you leave to take the first oppor-

tunity. But I shall take my measure to prevent your ever having that opportunity."

"What do you mean, Monsieur," cried St. Denis.

"I mean that I shall place you where you can never do me more harm," answered Armand quietly.

"You will not dare," began Father Pierre.

"I shall dare anything to gain my point, Monsieur," replied Dechapelle, "at present, however, I shall only detain you as a prisoner here. From this window there is a nice fall of some forty feet into a yard paved with stones. This door is of double oak and can be locked on the outside; these walls are all of solid stone and can therefore not be broken, nor can any sound penetrate through them. All attempts at escape will, therefore, be useless, your only means will be to disclose where Pauline is, enable me to recover both

her and my sister, give me time to escape from France, and sign a document to this effect before two witnesses."

During this long speech the Cardinal St. Denis grew deadly pale, his lips quivered, his frame shook with emotion. But that emotion was not fear, it was anger.

"Your plan, Monsieur," said he when he had recovered his speech, "will not avail you in the slightest. Inquiries will be made respecting me in every quarter of the city, every house will be searched, every man examined."

"But, Monsieur, if you do not accede to my position I shall in the course of a month or so cause you to be transported to some foreign country, where you will never be found."

"Monsieur," said the Cardinal, "I will give up your sister, but never Pauline. You have no right to Mdlle. Lefevre, though you may have to Madlle. Decliapelle."

“While you are here,” continued Armand, “I shall go to the King, request him to pardon Armand Dechappelle, whom I shall describe as a friend of mine, and so perhaps defeat your plans. I shall then depart from Paris, leaving you here under the charge of a friend who will set you at liberty when I am beyond your reach.”

As St. Denis did not answer, Armand bowed and quitted the room locking the door behind him.

The Cardinal rose and paced to and fro. The apartment was small and square, contained a table, four chairs, and a place for books, and looked out as Armand had said upon a court. There was no chance of escape from that room, and the priest grew almost faint with rage. He leant on the table and passed his hands over his heated brow, upon which the perspiration stood in large drops.

“To think,” he cried, “that I should be ever in the power of that villain. I will escape, however, let him do what he may.”

He sat down, and burying his face in his hands, began to lose himself in thought.

Meanwhile, Armand Dechapelle sought the King, whom he found in close conversation with Alphonse de St. Martin.

“I am glad you have returned, Senor,” said the King, “we shall now be able to resume our conversation.”

“If your majesty would grant me a private interview I shall consider it a great favour,” replied Dechapelle.

“Certainly, Don Juan, if you wish it,” returned Louis, “but had we not better go into some private room.”

“Right, Sire,” said Armand, and taking the monarch’s arm, he led him to a room, where they sat down to deliberate.

"Your majesty has, I believe," began Armand, "entirely quelled all attempts at rebellion."

"I have," said Louis in surprise.

"And therefore the persons concerned in that rebellion can be of no further harm to you."

"I do not say that," replied the King, "the leader of the civil war might rise again."

"But if he gave a promise never to rise again, would you pardon him, and allow him to remain in France?" asked Armand.

"I might, but I cannot say so positively. Besides, what interest can you have in the matter?"

"He is a friend of mine," said Dechapelle. "But there is another thing. I have reason to know that he is persecuted, calumniated, and greatly injured by the Cardinal St. Denis,

who has been his enemy since 1619. Mdlle. Pauline Lefevre is kept in a convent against her will; her father was murdered by the orders of St. Denis, whose right name is Favier. M. Dechappelle is betrothed to that young lady, but the priest keeps her away from him by force. This is the reason for his coming to France."

"But there is no proof of this!" cried the King.

"There is in the Cardinal's own hands, and in my power is proof of another murder. Besides, this priest has a son of his own in his house who will swear to his being his father."

"If I decide on pardoning the traitor well and good, but if not I must insist on your giving him up."

"Not so," replied Armand, "if you do not pardon him I shall facilitate his escape from Paris."

“You will do so at your own peril, Senor,” cried the King angrily, “but have you more to say?”

“I would ask you to demand of the Cardinal the restoration to Armand Dechapelle of Mdlle. Lefevre; his sister, Heloise Dechapelle; and the houses which he has seized. M. Armand is very rich, but he wishes for justice, and as he is a Protestant, he does not desire the Church to be enriched by his property.”

“Dechapelle is a formidable enemy,” said the King, “and it would not be just to myself to allow him to be in France unbound by any conditions, and possessing large wealth. I may be inclined to pardon him if he assents to certain conditions.”

“Which are?” asked Armand.

“*First*,” continued Louis, “he is never again to endeavour to subvert my government. *Secondly*, he is not to insist on the

public degradation of the Cardinal St. Denis. *Thirdly*, if from political reasons it is found expedient to remove him from France he will go willingly."

"He will agree to this, I know," said Armand.

"I will consider upon it," replied the King, "and we will then have another conference."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE King deliberated long upon the words of the supposed Spaniard. He was much surprised by the disappearance of Cardinal de St. Denis, but as there was no time for it to be publicly known no rumours were afloat. The Comte de la Roche strongly advised him to refuse pardon to the rebel unless he gave himself up. This advice was seconded by many other of the nobles, and the King ultimately determined to follow this course.

As, however, he had promised to see Don Juan de Castro before he made known his intention, he went a few evenings after his last

interview, and was once more closeted with Armand. The latter saw his fate written on the monarch's brow, and he at once resolved how to act.

"Well," said he, "I trust that my friend's wishes will meet with your approval."

"I have carefully considered his demands," replied the King, "but though inclined to grant them, there is only one course open to him, if he desires any pardon from me."

"And what is that?" asked Dechapelle eagerly.

"That he come publicly and deliver himself over to my justice," answered Louis.

Armand walked to the door, locked it, placed the key in his pocket and then going into a small closet at one side, washed off the olive hue on his face and returning to the King said, at the same time eyeing the monarch firmly:

“ Louis XIII! Behold your enemy!”

The king glanced at him for a moment without speaking so great was his astonishment.

At length he spoke.

“ And you have dared deceive me all this time?”

“ Yes,” replied Armand, “ I fear no man. But I am sure that this will not prevent your giving me justice.”

“ You shall have justice,” muttered the king, “ but why this ruse?”

“ Because how otherwise could I have seen you without danger, how could I have had this opportunity?”

“ You must let me go instantly,” said the king, “ or—”

“ I must request your attendance here, sire, until I have brought two or three witnesses to my truth.”

“You would not dare detain me here against my will,” cried the King rising.

Armand smiled.

“I who have dared to stand up against you in open rebellion; I who have defeated your armies; I with whom you were glad to come to terms! Shall I dare? Why ask me so simple a question?”

“Do you not fear my anger?” asked the King.

“I do not. There are now fifty thousand men in the provinces, who would rise immediately on my appearance. I shall go again to the disturbed place and raise the standard of revolt unless you comply with my simple request. I merely ask you to see my witnesses.”

The King gave him his hand.

“You are a generous and brave foe, for you

do not exact your pardon but merely justice. I will see those you desire."

Seeing Armand about to lock the door behind him he asked, "why he locked the door?"

"A general does not leave his prisoners at large except on parole of honor," replied Armand smiling, and the monarch sat down, hardly yet able to repress his indignation.

The first thing that Armand did was to see the Cardinal, and inform him that he was in possession of the King's person. St. Denis at first pretended not to believe such an extraordinary assertion, but when he was told that Louis was about to see Madame Semplere and Madame Lambert, he entreated his enemy to save him from such disgrace.

"You must then give me an order to the Abbess of St. Eustace, or whatever convent Madlle. Pauline and my sister are in, to de-

liver them up to me or my friends," returned Armand.

"I will—I will," cried the priest, "but you must not let the King see those women."

"That is irrevocable," said Dechapelle, "the only thing I can promise is, that there shall be no public disgrace."

"In that case I shall not do as you ask me," answered the Cardinal.

"Very well, Monsieur," said Armand, "it will be all the same thing: when your robes are stripped off you, you will be obliged to give them up."

"But suppose they are dead!" hissed the priest in his ear.

"Then," said Armand, turning pale, and trembling in spite of himself—"then *you* become answerable for their lives."

"To whom? No one can say that I ever touched them," cried St. Denis.

“M. de St. Denis,” said Armand, in as firm a voice as he could command, and grasping the priest’s arm till he cried out with pain, “you know me by this time! If anything has happened or happens to those two ladies, you are answerable to me; and I will never let you escape my vengeance. Remember!”

He was about to depart, when St. Denis seized his arm.

“Stay, M. Dechapelle,” cried he, “I will sign the paper.”

“You can do so while I am away. If you do not, nothing shall save you from disgrace.”

Dechapelle then left him to himself, and sought Alphonse de St. Martin and Hercule Bassompierre, the former of whom he sent in search of Madame Lambert, and the latter for Madame Semplere. He then returned to the King whom he found much more calm

and resolute than when he left him. He had evidently been arranging some plan in his mind which pleased him.

“This is a very ridiculous figure for the King of France to make,” cried he, in an apparently jovial voice as Armand entered. “Here am I imprisoned against my will in the midst of my own capital.”

“Your Majesty may depart now,” said Armand, “if you think fit to change your mind so quickly. But by Heavens, Sire, I *will* have justice if I set all Paris in flames for it. I have borne enough from royalty and priestcraft to drive any other man out of his senses; but, thank God, I have an iron constitution—a mind full of energy; and the day will come when you will remember my words.”

“You are bold, Monsieur,” said the King,

who had stood gazing with wonder at him as he made this fiery speech.

Armand Dechapelle was, as we have often said, a handsome man; and as he stood there, his whole form dilated and trembling with intense emotion, his features assumed a beauty that surpassed all belief.

“Your Majesty might have learnt that before,” replied Armand, “but I should be bolder still were I as unscrupulous as I am fearless. This house might be your resting place for ever, and no one would ever know it. The Comte de la Roche has departed, and while he is away I might say you had gone, and every one would believe me. I could, moreover, dress in your clothes, and drive away in your carriage and then my domestics would swear they saw you depart from my house. It could be done were I unscrupulous, for I have the courage.”

“That would not be bravery but cowardice. An assassination is always cowardly,” answered the King, who turned slightly white.

“You mistake me. I did not mean murder, but merely to detain you a captive here and enjoy the pleasure of your society.”

“You shall suffer for this,” muttered Louis between his teeth; but his reflections were cut short by the entrance of Hercule Bassompierre, Alphonse de St. Martin, Madame Semplere, and Madame Lambert. After having introduced them to the King, Armand went out and returned to the Cardinal’s chamber, not doubting the result of his admonitions.

He found the worthy priest seated before the table writing.

“I have done what you require of me,” said the Cardinal; “here it is.”

The document ran thus:—

"MADAME,

"As Mademoiselles Pauline Lefevre and Heloise Dechappelle do not desire any longer to remain members of the Roman Catholic Church, I authorise you to allow them to withdraw from the Convent of St. Eustace, and return to their friends.

(Signed) "ST. DENIS."

"January, 1622."

"*Bien!*" exclaimed Armand, "and now, Cardinal, will you be kind enough to accompany me to see the King?"

"Who are with him?" exclaimed the priest.

"Two of my friends, and Mesdames Semplere and Lambert," replied Armand.

"Heavens, Monsieur! do you wish to ruin me?"

"I do," answered Armand laconically.
"Your arm."

CHAPTER XVII.

ON their entrance the King's wonder was considerably increased. Indeed, he felt very much inclined to suppose that he was under some mental delusion—that he was in a dream. But if such were his thoughts, he was soon undeceived by the Cardinal's speaking. Madame Lambert and Madame Semplere recapitulated to Louis the events which they both knew, and in which the latter had been engaged. The monarch was indignant at two things—first, that he should thus be forced to listen against his will to evidence

against a favourite; secondly, at his having been so deceived by that favourite.

Having obtained the King's signature to the order above mentioned, Armand was comparatively satisfied, and it only remained now to obtain the pardon.

"Sire," said he, "I shall now venture to ask you to ratify the promise you gave me so lately, namely, that I should be allowed to remain in France without danger?"

"I shall let you have the pardon on the first opportunity; in fact, as soon as I get back to my palace," replied the King courteously.

"And, M. de St. Denis," continued Armand, "will you be kind enough to give me the will, the letters, &c., of M. Lefevre."

"I have them not with me," said the Cardinal, "but I will send you them."

Hercule Bassompierre at this moment

stepped over to where Armand was standing, and whispered something in his ear. After a moment the latter spoke—

“M. de St. Denis, may I trouble you for another copy of that document, and then you are at liberty to go.”

“And the King?” enquired St. Denis.

“Oh! he has been free to go all the time,” replied Armand laughing.

The monarch appeared to laugh also, but any one who could have looked into his heart would have seen a very volcano raging there, every moment threatening to burst forth. The Cardinal gave the required paper, and he and the King signed it. Hercule and Alphonse signed them also as witnesses, and the door was then thrown open to the monarch and his favorite.

The former seemed placid, but his heart leaped with joy as he descended the stairs,

jumped into the carriage with very unkingly haste, and shaking his clenched fist at Armand's mansion, threw himself back in his carriage in a fury of anger. The Cardinal on the other hand took no pains to disguise his rage, but with flashing eyes went down quickly into the street, and not having his own carriage took a hired one and drove to his palace. Had he any intention of adhering to his promises, and had the King? We shall see.

When they had disappeared Armand spoke.

"What do you think of this campaign?"

"It is an extremely dangerous victory," replied Hercule, "the King means not a word he says."

"Of course not," answered Dechapelle, "not more does Father Pierre, but here are their signatures. I shall start off for St. Eustace directly with one order, you can go another way with the other, and if they capture

me you can rescue Pauline and Heloise, they have no reason to take you for they do not even know you. Alphonse, as you love me, go and order post horses, and send off a courier to order them to keep them ready at the different towns between this and Poitou."

St. Martin immediately set off on his errand while Armand and Hercule commenced disguising themselves. The former put on a red wig and other things which made a very good mask, and the latter did likewise. Alphonse was left in charge of the house with Claudine, and Hercule Bassompierre set off one way and Armand another. It was evening as the postchaise containing the latter dashed through the forest of Montmorency. He remembered the evening on which had in 1619 passed through it on his way to St. Eustace for the first time. Then he had no cares, now he was bowed down with

them, then he was free to come and go as he pleased, now he was a proscribed exile. But would he have exchanged his position now for his position then? No. He had not then seen Pauline.

When he stopped at the first town he changed horses without even taking refreshment, and posted on again. About half an hour after his arrival another postchaise came dashing up, the horses covered with foam, and the carriage covered with mud up to the roof.

"Has any carriage passed here lately," asked a gentleman eagerly from the inside.

"Yes, Monsieur, about half an hour ago."

"Horses then immediately," cried the gentleman.

"They haven't been ordered Monsieur," said the groom.

"Never mind, I will pay any money. I am on

business from the King," said M. de St. Denis, for it was he.

Horses were now quickly put to the carriage, and in a few minutes they were soon speeding along rapidly. The snow still lay on the ground, and travelling was dangerous, but M. de St. Denis did not care for danger, and by dint of bribes he prevailed on the postilion to drive forward at the rate of fifteen miles an hour.

On the other hand, the man who drove Armand would not proceed faster than ten miles an hour, so that very soon the two carriages came in sight of each other. Armand saw his danger, and bidding the postilion stop he leaped out, jumped on the box, seized the reins himself, and lashing the horses, put them to their utmost speed. The carriage swung from side to side as it dashed along, and the postilion tried to stop him.

"If you dare to stop the horses," cried Armand, "I will shoot you dead. I am flying for my life, madman!"

The postilion of the priest had no compassion for himself or his animals, and, therefore, came along at full speed. It was now a trial between the horses. The delay occasioned by Armand's getting out was in favour of St. Denis. The foremost carriage seemed to proceed as if by magic—the postilion sat paralysed, trembling and holding on with both hands, and declaring that the vehicle would catch fire from the tremendous friction. Armand, however, listened to nothing: but kept steadily on.

They came to a town—dashed through, amid the amazed crowds of people. A hill now rose in sight, and the horses flagged. Dechapelle, however, gave them a tremendous lash, which revived their flagging energies.

They dashed up the hill and reached the summit.

“If you descend in the same way,” cried the postilion, “we are lost!”

Armand thought—“no matter which way I die, thus or by the executioner,” and down they went. The horses could no longer stand it, and on coming to the bottom they rolled over; the carriage was dashed heavily on its side, and Armand and the postilion pitched into a field close by. The former rose immediately, and though much bruised seized one of the horses, cut the traces, and dragging him up leaped on his back and was once more off.

The postchaise of the priest now came thundering down the hill, passed the fallen equipage, and followed the horseman. One of those inside, who was a gendarme, raised his musket, and taking a too fatal aim brought

down the poor horse as it staggered on at a splendid pace. Armand thrown to the ground had only just time to rise and draw his sword, when the carriage drew up and his enemies leaped out.

“Resistance is useless,” cried the priest, “you are my prisoner!”

“No, Monsieur, I will fight while I have a drop of blood left.”

One of the gendarmes raised his musket to fire. Armand forgot Pauline, his sister, his parents, everything, and throwing away his sword cried,—

“Ah! kill me, and put me far from the reach of this wicked world.”

He recovered his self-possession, however, and drawing a pistol from his breast levelled it at the priest. It missed fire, and flinging it at a gendarme, Armand rushed on St. Denis. The butt-end of the other man’s

musket, however, soon brought him down, and while in this helpless state, he was bound, conveyed to the carriage, and once more on his way to Paris.

“At length I shall have my revenge!” cried Father Pierre as he gazed at his reviving enemy. “When he is gone no more foes will remain to me on earth.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

MEANWHILE Hercule Bassompierre pursued his journey to St. Eustace. He had managed to avoid all pursuit, and found himself at the door of the convent without ever having met an interruption. He demanded to see the abbess, and was soon admitted to her presence. She was in no mood for conversation, however, and upon seeing the Father Pierre's missive, immediately ordered the two ladies to be brought to her. On their appearance she congratulated them with forced heartiness on the accomplishment, however tardy it might

be, of their wishes, and bade them immediately prepare for their journey.

The effect on the mind of Heloise was overwhelming—in Pauline the announcement only produced a calm, a quiet feeling of happiness. Heloise appeared to sink under the greatness of her joy—to Pauline it gave renewed strength. They had not much preparation to make, and in less than an hour were *en route* to St. Gilles, where they were to await the arrival of Armand. The first inquiry of Mdlle. Lefevre was about her lover, and upon hearing that he was pardoned by the King, and on his way to meet them, she gave vent to her delight in a torrent of tears.

Hercule and Heloise were happy. Nothing now stood between their union, and as they talked earnestly and low about their love and about their future, Pauline thought—"Shall I ever be happy?" Everything, however,

seemed to be going on as it should, and it was with a heart full to overflowing with joy that Pauline tripped lightly up the path to meet M. and Mme. Dechapelle. After welcoming them warmly her first inquiry was—

“Is he not come?”

“Whom, my child, do you mean?” asked M. Dechapelle.

“Armand,—your son,” replied Pauline.

“He is not here, my child,” said his mother, “nor do we expect him. It would be unsafe for him to be seen here.”

“He is pardoned, mother,” cried Heloise, “and will be here in a few days, perhaps to-morrow.”

In their general joy, however, Bassompierre did not join. He did not understand why Armand had not arrived; he was to have been before him at St. Eustace, and only gave him directions to go there in case he himself were

unable from accident. He feared, therefore, the truth; that he had once more fallen into the hands of his enemies.

On the day after their arrival Hercule demanded the hand of Heloise in marriage, and as the old man's consent had been obtained before, it was of course ratified. Bassompierre had no need to ask what were the sentiments of his beautiful betrothed, and, therefore, in the course of the following week the marriage was solemnised. The wedding was a plain one; no display, no grandeur, was there; but true love and happy confidence—things far more durable—presided over the ceremony. The young couple settled in a cottage near that of Madame and Monsieur Dechapelle, and they spent most of their evenings together, visiting each other alternately.

But when a fortnight passed and Armand did not appear, their apprehensions began to

be aroused. Although Bassompierre was careful not to allow his suspicions to become known, his anxious face betrayed his uneasiness, and Pauline felt once more the pangs of sorrow. She had so implicitly trusted in the coming happiness that the disappointment was heightened by the revulsion of feeling, but she would not yet believe the King so treacherous or so malicious.

"Hercule," she said one day, "I am afraid Armand is again a prisoner. Tell me truly whether you know it to be so or not."

"No, Mademoiselle, I do not *know* it, but it is what I fear," replied Bassompierre.

"But did not the King give him his pardon, signed with his own hands?" exclaimed Madlle. Lefevre.

"He promised it; but who would trust Louis XIII? I would not trust him with the life of my dog."

Pauline did not ask more, but entered the room. There she continued all day; and with the snow beating at her window, and the cold sun now and then peering into her cheerless room, she sat musing on her future.

When evening came she descended into the room where the family was assembled—Madame and Monsieur Dechapelle, Hercule and Heloise—and took her accustomed seat by the fire. She was silent and pale, and nobody strove to rouse her. They could have offered her no consolation, and they wisely desisted from speaking to her. The old man told a story, or related an anecdote; Madame listened with her hands on her lap; Hercule, with his brow calm, but his lips compressed, sat almost silent on his chair; Heloise wore a look of happiness, which, in spite of everything, she could not throw off, although now and then she looked sadly at Pauline, who, with her

hands clasped on her knees, was gazing at the fire, seemingly intently watching the flames as they shot up and disappeared, and fluttered fantastically among the fiery embers.

An atmosphere of gloom pervaded the whole assemblage. The wind, which had risen, and now rushed wildly round the house and roared hoarsely down the wide chimney, was the only sound from the outside that relieved the monotony. The snow had ceased pattering against the window panes, the speakers had hushed, and the melancholy silence was almost insupportable. Suddenly above the voices of the wind was heard a dull rumbling sound, every moment approaching nearer. It could not be mistaken; it was a carriage urged along evidently at full speed. Pauline started up, and grasped the back of her tall oaken chair.

“It is he!” she cried, and before any one

knew what she meant, she ran out into the passage and threw open the door, while the cold night air swept with a gust into the warm room.

The carriage approached—the two lamps swung from side to side as it dashed up the long green lane, and at length with a plunge the horses were brought up at the end of the garden. The door opened, and out leapt a man. Pauline did not wait longer, but rushing out into the night air clasped the traveller in her arms, sobbing—

“Armand! dear Armand!”

“Madam,” cried the stranger, “you are mistaken! I am only his servant.”

He said this kindly, but the shock was too great, and when he entered with her into the house, she was laid fainting on the sofa.

“In the name of Heaven what has happened?” cried Hercule, seeing that the servant

was as pale as death, and seemingly in great agitation.

“Here is a letter, Monsieur,” said the servant. “Allow me to sit down, Monsieur, I have not slept for three nights.”

“Yes: sit down, my good fellow. M. Dechappelle, would you be kind enough to give him some wine,” cried Hercule, and tearing open the letter he read as follows:—

“My dear Bassompierre,—The drama is nearly played. I am in Paris and in prison. The traitor King has, of course, deceived me, and denies having given me any hopes of pardon. I am to be tried on the 10th February. For Heaven’s sake be here to help me. Adieu. For ever your devoted friend,
ARMAND.”

“It is now the 5th,” said Bassompierre. “I must start to-night. Heloise, you must take care of Pauline in my absence.”

Madlle. Lefevre had recovered whilst he read the letter, and rousing herself when she heard Hercule's words, she exclaimed—

“I shall go with you, Hercule. Armand shall not languish in prison without my being there to comfort him.”

Hercule thought of the delay this would occasion, and did not speak. Pauline understood him immediately, and said—

“I know what you fear; but I can travel as well as you when I have such a purpose in view. Hercule, you cannot oppose me under such circumstances as these.”

“No, Pauline: you shall come with me. There is no time to be lost, however, Pierre,” he said to the servant, “are the horses fresh?”

“Yes, Monsieur,” replied the valet. “I changed at the last post town on purpose to

have them fresh to commence our journey. I have ordered post-horses at every station on our road back."

"That is right," cried Hercule, "we shall have plenty of time yet."

CHAPTER XIX.

AFTER taking a hurried leave of Monsieur and Madame Dechapelle and Heloise, Hercule and Pauline entered the carriage. A few—but *very* few—necessaries were taken by Madlle. Lefevre: and Hercule did not wait to make any change in his dress. The old couple and Madame Bassompierre declared their intention of following on the next day, so as to arrive at least the evening of the day of trial. The journey to Paris was a silent one, except when Hercule addressed some questions to the faithful servant who rode inside with them.

It appeared that immediately on his arrival

in Paris, Armand was thrown into prison, on the charge of being in France when under a sentence of banishment. It was in vain that he declared his innocence—in vain that he called upon the King to remember the pardon he had verbally granted him. Louis XIII. had *forgotten* that pardon, and refused to be reminded of it. The Cardinal, in order to make a greater show of justice, was also in prison awaiting his trial, which was to precede that of Armand. The result of it Armand could not but fear would be a farce.

It was as he expected. The Cardinal was brought before his judges on the 3rd of February. Madame Semplere and Madame Lambert gave their evidence, but were said to have been bribed by Armand. Dechappelle gave his evidence in a speech that made the court thrill with horror, but produced, however, no favourable effect upon the one-sided

judges. Father Pierre acknowledged Roderigo to be his son; but as he was married previous to his entering the priesthood, and his wife had also died before that period, all prosecution on that score was overruled. After a long mockery of a trial, the Cardinal de St. Denis was declared to be honourably acquitted, and therefore all who heard of this were beforehand prejudiced against Armand.

The evidence in the hands of Dechapelle was so great, and his witnesses so easily obtainable, that he almost hoped for an acquittal in his own case also. Hercule Bassompierre and Alphonse de St. Martin had both heard the King say that as he had acceded to his conditions, he would write out his pardon as soon as he returned to his palace. He trusted, however, too much in the word of the King.

On the evening of the 9th February the

wind rushed coldly and bleakly through the little barred window of Armand's cell. A faint beam of moonlight struggled through the fettered space. But

“Silent he sat, and sad,
As the moonbeams fell
On the floor of his damp and narrow cell,
'Twas all the space he had.”

He had hope—but that hope was a faint one—and it lay not in man but in Heaven. He could only think that a miracle might be wrought to turn the heart of the French tyrant. The hours moved on, but he moved not—the clock spoke, but he spoke not. He listened intently, however, as the bell tolled the hour, for every time that sounded he felt himself approaching—freedom: or was it death? It is midnight—all is dark—

“The moonbeams fade, and the light that fell
Softly and cheerily into his cell,
No longer plays on his sunken floor,
Or glance from the rust of his iron door.”

He was just upon the point of getting off into a light sleep when he heard the lock grate, and ere he could rouse himself the door was flung back upon its hinges, and the jailor entered.

"It's quite against orders, M. Dechapelle," said he, "but the lady looked so sorrowful I couldn't help letting her come in. Shall I tell her to enter?"

"Yes, my good fellow," cried Armand, slipping a gold piece into his hand, "directly."

"You won't mention it to any one," whispered the man; "much obliged to you for the money, and if I can do you a service at any time you can reckon on me."

He disappeared in the gloom of the passage, and Armand heard feet approaching. A lady! Who could it be? He was not long in doubt. Pauline rushed rather than walked

into the cell, and ere the door had been closed they were clasped in each other's arms. Hercule Bassompierre, who entered at the same time, did not speak, but when the first burst of emotion was over, Armand cried, at the same time seizing his hand—

“Hercule—my brother—you are the best friend I have in the world.”

“Am I in time for the trial, Armand?” asked Bassompierre, scarcely able to repress his eagerness.

“Yes; but what can we expect? A king who has once broken his word will not scruple to break it again. A man who is afraid of another when alone with him, will yet have the courage when surrounded by his courtiers and his guards to sentence him to death.”

“This is cruel, Armand,” whispered

Pauline, "you may yet be happy. You ought to be happy now," continued she, endeavouring to force a smile, "when you meet me after an absence of so long a time."

"And what a meeting it is," thought Armand, but he merely said :

"Dearest Pauline,—I know you love me more than all the world besides, and Heaven only knows how much I love you, but it would be mere cruelty if I were to induce you to hope—if I were to persuade you that I should certainly be saved, feeling all the while the possibility, nay, probability of the contrary. You have a mind superior to trifles, dearest; you have a mind superior to most women, and you can appreciate what I say."

He imprinted a kiss on the forehead of the weeping girl, who lay with her face half hidden in his bosom, and as if roused by his words

Pauline sat upright, and wiping away the tears from her eyes, said :

“Dearest Armand, I love you far more for what you have just said than I should have done if you had deceived me by false hopes. I will do as you bid me, only tell me what I *can* do for you.”

Armand was proceeding to speak when the turnkey entered.

“Monsieur,” said he, “I have sat up on purpose for you to-night. I am obliged to ask you to shorten your interview.”

The man had already done more than could have been expected, and, indeed, more than was safe for him to do. Armand, therefore, although overcome by grief at the idea of parting, was obliged to take leave of Pauline, who again wept bitter tears of anguish. Even Hercule could not repress a tear, and wring-

ing his friend's hand he hurried Pauline away.

When the door closed behind them Armand remained for some minutes standing in the middle of his cell. It seemed to him as if they had already taken his life from him—the light of life *was* gone.

CHAPTER XX.

THE trial of Armand Dechapelle was to take place on the 10th of February, at half-past ten o'clock in the morning. The prison was opened at eight, and the first to enter were Pauline and Hercule Bassompierre. After the first sad greetings were over, Armand made the former sit down by him, and taking her hand said :

“Pauline, I could almost wish I had not seen you this morning. But, as it has so happened, promise me one thing.”

“I will do anything and everything you bid me, Armand,” replied Pauline, softly, but

in a tone that made him feel she would have the courage to act as he wished.

“Promise me not to weep in court if I am pronounced guilty, for you would then unman me. I wish to bear everything like a Spartan, that my foes may not have the pleasure of seeing me moved.”

“I will remain as firm as yourself, Armand,” said Pauline; “and besides, I shall demand to be heard as a witness. I can prove much against Father Pierre.”

“But he is a cardinal now,” replied Armand, with an attempt at gaiety, “and you will be afraid of him.”

“I am not more afraid of his harming me than of your proving unfaithful to me, dearest Armand,” answered Pauline; “neither he nor the king has any power over me.”

They talked on thus for some time, Hercule Bassompierre joining occasionally in the

conversation, when the door opened and the turnkey entering said :

“ The judges are ready. Let me lead the way.”

After taking a hasty leave of Pauline and Hercule, Armand followed the turnkey, who led the way between files of soldiers to the Hall of Justice. To give the trial an appearance of reality it was to be quite public. The place was as full as it could hold of people of all ranks, and as Armand entered, his noble bearing, handsome features and calm expression caused a murmur of admiration. A seat apart from the rest was assigned to Hercule and Pauline, and among the crowd could be distinguished the faces of Alphonse de St. Martin, Madame Dupont, M. Vincent, and several of Armand's friends.

When all had entered and the doors were closed the indictment was read, charging him

with being in France when under sentence of banishment, well knowing that if he entered the country it was at the peril of his life. Also with threatening the king by saying that if he were not pardoned he would raise again the standard of Protestantism.

“To the first indictment,” said Armand in a firm voice, “I plead not guilty; to the second *guilty*.”

At these words a considerable sensation was produced in the court, and Pauline looked at him reproachfully. The Cardinal St. Denis was the first witness called, and in a long, complicated and false speech he described minutely every action of Armand's life, bringing in many circumstances that had no bearing upon the case.

Many other witnesses were called, and when all for the prosecution had retired, Hercule stepped forward and gave his evidence. Alphonse

de St. Martin also proved the promise of the King, which was answered by the King who was present, by the affirmation that he was forced into saying what he did not mean.

Pauline also, though much against Armand's wishes, came forward and gave evidence against Father Pierre. The feeling of the assembly was evidently with him, and this favourable impression was increased when in a calm but firm voice he delivered an harangue, quiet, but yet in some degree impassioned. He recapitulated his adventures in Spain; the scenes at his house near the Tuileries; the promise of the King to pardon him, and called upon his judges to acquit him at once upon so strong evidence. He acknowledged having threatened the King, but did not see that that amounted to any great crime.

He was to be tried by a jury, and after an impressive speech from the judge they retired

to consult. During their absence, which was protracted, Pauline sat with her face pale and her eyes fixed upon the door where the gentlemen had entered. The people were extremely quiet, a few muttered sentences could be distinguished, but in general all remained in the height of expectation. Dechapelle himself, though extremely calm and Spartan like as he had desired to appear, burnt with a raging fire within. He well knew the consequence of being found guilty.

After an absence of an hour the jury re-entered the court and amid a breathless silence the Judge spoke:

“Gentlemen,” he said, “have you well considered and weighed the evidence?”

“We have.”

“Is the prisoner guilty or not guilty.”

“*Guilty.*”

At these words a suppressed cry was heard

in one corner of the court, and Armand saw that Pauline had fainted. When she had recovered she refused to retire, for she wished to hear the words of her doomed but beloved Armand.

“Gentlemen,” he said, rising and addressing the assembled spectators, “be not astonished at the verdict just found. My doom is death but I cannot say that it takes me by surprise. The evidence brought forward by myself and my friends would have been sufficient in any tribunal where justice was considered, to acquit me at once. The jury, however, was ordered beforehand to find me guilty. I do not blame those gentlemen who composed the jury, for it was their duty to obey the commands of their ruler. Thank Heaven! I acknowledge no king on earth, but whether I do so or not does not in fact much signify. I must die: but the day will come when a terrible retribution

will follow my enemies, if not in this world in the next. Do you suppose, tyrant," he exclaimed, turning to the King, "that the seeds of rebellion are torn up. No! they will yet burst forth with more fury than ever. My fervent wish is that you may some day stand in my position, but you can never be quite the same as myself, for I stand here innocent and condemned. Gentlemen, I am wholly and entirely guiltless of this charge; the witnesses against me have perjured themselves, the jury was ordered to condemn me, and I am standing here convicted of a crime which I never committed. If the people of France suffer me to die without a struggle I shall be sorry I ever fought in their behalf."

The judges had many times during this speech endeavoured to prevent his uttering such seditious language: but the King, by a wave of his hand, bade them let him proceed!

Sentence of death was then pronounced upon him, and a fortnight allowed him to prepare for death. Armand was then removed: and leave given to the jailor to allow any of his friends who wished it, to spend the time with him. This was particularly gratifying, as it would enable Pauline to be near him until the time allotted for his execution.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE time passed drearily. Pauline, who up to this moment had been firm and even energetic, now succumbed to the horror of her situation, and appeared perfectly helpless. Hercule remained still full of strength of mind, and often said to his unhappy friend, —

“Armand, I know it is not death you fear: it is for those you leave behind you grieve: and who indeed can view calmly their departure from a world where lie all they love, in their fulness of youth and vigour. But remember, I am your avenger. If you die, the King and the Cardinal die also.”

“Hercule,” Armand would answer, “I shall die much happier if I know they are to be left to their fate. Do not expose your life for me—do not dream of vengeance: it is unchristian, and you will never again be blessed with peace of mind. Let time and Providence work their punishment.”

To Pauline he rarely mentioned the coming catastrophe—he spoke of other things. But the arrival of M. and Madame Dechapelle and Heloise was a sad trial. The grief of the mother was terrible in its calmness; the grief of the father was terrible in its fury. Something of his old spirit revived within him; and he swore to avenge his son’s death upon the Priest and the King.

On hearing that Hercule was married to Heloise Armand grew deadly pale, and almost staggered to the ground: but recovering himself, he grasped his friend’s hand saying,—

“You, at least, will be happy. You are now my brother. Take care of poor Pauline, and my mother and father. I commit them to your charge.”

M. Dechappelle and Pauline Lefevre lost no time in presenting themselves before the King, who received them with apparent kindness but yet coldness.

“Your son has broken the laws,” said he, “and must pay the penalty. I cannot revoke the sentence.”

“Do you not fear that his hundred thousand friends in Poitou, and Guienne, and Orleanois, will rise and burn Paris about your head when they hear of his death?” cried the indignant father.

“I do not fear anything of the kind,” replied the King, “your son, at the head of twice as many, could not do so; and he is superior to most men.”

Then, after a moment's reflection, he added,—

“If M. Armand will take service in my army I will try and commute the sentence.”

Dechapelle would listen to no such terms. “He would rather,” he said, “die twice than help to keep the people under the yoke of a tyrant.”

Father Pierre, in the meanwhile, was not thoroughly pleased by the sentence. He saw Pauline several times—she was pale and agitated, and sorrowful, but the shock would not kill her. As she was out of his power, however, he wished for something that would take a fatal effect, and concocted a diabolical scheme to try her feelings. He went, therefore, to the palace, and demanded admittance to the King. On entering his presence, he said after a while,—

“Sire, you once promised me that you

would grant me a favour. I am come to demand one."

"And what is it?" said the King, laughing. "Is it a dukedom, or a governorship, or—"

"Your Majesty forgets I am a priest."

"Not at all. But you might have become tired of your hat."

"It is a favour difficult to grant, perhaps, but one I should value above everything. It is the life of Armand Dechapelle."

"Cardinal!" cried Louis, turning rather pale, "you must be joking. It was you yourself who advised me to execute him!"

"True, Sire, but I have since repented of it. Death is too great a punishment for a simple act of disobedience."

"You fatigue me," said the King. "Let us talk of other matters."

"If that is the case your Majesty shall not further be troubled with my presence."

And so saying, St. Denis rose; and before the monarch had recovered from his astonishment had left the Palace.

"*Morbleu!*" exclaimed Louis, "the Cardinal has got a spirit." And so saying he rang a bell.

A page appeared.

"Send the Comte de la Roche to me," cried the monarch. "I wish to speak with him on important business."

A week before the execution, a party was assembled in a café on the Boulevards. It consisted of M. Dechappelle, Hercule Bassompierre, Alphonse de St. Martin, and two or three others. They were speaking of a rescue.

"It can very well be done," said Dechappelle. "Who will go to Poitou?"

"I will," cried Alphonse. "I have influence there. How many men will do?"

“There ought not to be more than a thousand,” said Hercule, “or suspicion will be excited.”

“You have no time to lose,” exclaimed M. Dechapelle—“three days there and three days back. It will be stiff work.”

“I must set off this minute,” said Alphonse, “Adieu, my friends. This is the 16th: expect me on the evening of the 23rd. Adieu.”

It was agreed by the conspirators to say nothing of the matter to Armand. Their plan was to attack the cortège as it proceeded to the place of execution, for if they assailed the scaffold he might be killed in the confusion. For two days before the 24th the scaffold was got ready. The execution was to take place in the open space fronting the Church of Notre Dame, and high barriers of double wood were erected round the scaffold to prevent a rush. Excitement was at its

highest pitch in Paris. Many looked forward to the event as a fête-day on which there would be a general holiday.

The 23rd came, and with the shades of evening arrived Alphonse de St. Martin. He had only been able to procure five hundred. The provinces appeared cowed down, the people heard with indignation of the approaching execution, but none but this small band of patriots had the courage to draw the sword. They were waiting for the fresh storm which broke out in 1628.

The evening spent in the prison was a period of grief terrible to describe. The mother sat wringing her hands; Pauline lay with her head hidden in her lover's bosom in an agony of grief. Hercule was more calm and hopeful, while the face of Armand—pale as ashes and convulsed with emotion—yet indicated that he meant to meet his

death as became him. M. Dechappelle was moodily brooding over his grief and muttering vengeance against the tyrant; Heloise was sobbing audibly.

“My friends,” said Armand, raising Pauline and standing upright, “you do not know how much evil you are doing. I ought to be calm, resigned, firm, but when I behold you all weeping around me my spirit sinks, and I can scarcely refrain from weeping with you. Pauline, Heloise, Hercule, and you, my mother and father, would you have me die like a coward?”

“No, my son,” exclaimed M. Dechappelle; “but can you blame us who so much love you when we express our grief? Hercule is the most resigned of us all.”

“Yes, father,” said he, “because I am the most hopeful.”

“Hope,” cried Armand, with a ghastly

smile, "what hope is there for me? I have lost that long ago."

"My brother," whispered Hercule, "do you not see how much Pauline feels those speeches of yours?"

"Yes," said Armand, "but why awaken false hope in her heart?"

"It is my firm conviction," returned Bas-sompierre, in the same voice, "and if you live remember my words—it is my firm conviction that you will yet be happy."

"If I did not know your heart, Hercule," answered Armand, "I should accuse you of mocking me. But you would hardly do such a thing to me in my state. Happiness! the very word seems to me to convey terror and dismay. When I see you and Heloise a thousand daggers pierce my heart. Hercule, you do not know what it is to die."

"Can you think that I and your sister will

ever be happy?" cried Bassompierre; "if so, you wrong both myself and her."

At a late hour of the night they parted. We cannot describe the farewell scene between Armand and Pauline; such harrowing descriptions are best passed over, and we hasten on with rapidity to the next act of this drama of life.

CHAPTER XXII.

IN the grey of the morning the crowd began to assemble, although the execution was not to take place till nine o'clock. Those who had not the courage or the vile taste to witness the consummation of the sentence, lined the road from the prison to the Place de Notre Dame. Some of those, however, who stood there intended to close after the procession, and witness both ceremonies. Among the crowd a practised eye might have distinguished figures and faces that were uncharacteristic of Paris; and a peculiar distribution of men in long cloaks. But the people were so ex-

cited and so little suspicious that they never imagined any interference with the law. The idea of a rescue never once entered their heads. Towards eight the assemblage increased greatly in volume: and ribald jokes and false alarms were the order of the day.

Pauline, who had not the heart nor the wish to see her lover executed, occupied a window where she could see him pass: but in order that he might not lose his courage she resolved not to allow him to perceive her. M. Dechappelle, Heloise, and Madame Dechappelle were also there; and the two latter remarked several times on the absence of Hercule. Monsieur, who well knew where he was, refrained from speaking.

At length a thrill of expectation ran through the crowd; the prison gates were thrown open and the procession began gradually to issue from the sombre portal. First

came a strong body of soldiers, fully armed and on horseback. Then marched some priests with their heads bare and bearing each of them a cross. Then the executioner, with an immense axe over his shoulder. He was dressed entirely in black, and was also bare headed. Then, in the midst of a hollow square of soldiers, rode the prisoner in a cart drawn by a single horse. His face was calm, his figure erect, and his dress was plain but carefully arranged. A murmur of admiration ran through the crowd: but M. Dechappelle clasped his hands together and involuntarily exclaimed,—

“He is lost!”

The soldiers numbered at least five thousand.

At the end of the street—a view of which could be commanded from the window—the crowd was dense and agitated; and the father

gazed out with starting eyes as the first body of soldiers was allowed to pass untouched—then the priests and the executioner went by untouched. But when the square of troops arrived escorting the prisoner, the thin line of soldiers which ranged along the street was violently pushed back, and a volley of musketry brought many of the horsemen to the ground. The confusion became general, volley after volley resounded through the streets: and the party at the window gazed out in eagerness to watch the result; for they now, all of them, understood the movement.

Meanwhile, Hercule and Alphonse with a small body of men, had penetrated almost to the cart, where Armand stood gazing on with an agitated face and his brow streaming with perspiration.

“Why do you not jump down and save yourself?” cried Alphonse and Hercule to-

gether, as they sent two gigantic troopers into the road.

"I am bound hand and foot," said Armand. "Hercule, desist from this madness. It is all over with me."

Hardly had he uttered these words, when the horsemen, forcing their way back, rode over all who attempted to oppose them. A great number were killed on both sides; the little band of patriots fought with mad energy, but reinforcements arrived, and in a few moments all who could not fly were surrounded and cut to pieces.

Once more the cortège moved gloomily on, and M. Dechapelle, throwing himself back into his chair, buried his face in his hands and sobbed in agony. In a moment or two Hercule and Alphonse entered the room wounded and covered with blood, and in a choking voice, the former exclaimed,—

“Poor Armand—we have failed—he must die!”

“We shall soon know,” murmured M. Dechapelle, “it will not take long to arrive at Notre Dame; and then, and not till then will I cease to hope.

“Father,” said Hercule, kissing him on the forehead with his blood-stained lips, “do not deceive yourself: there can be no hope. It remains for us to avenge his death. A rescue is now impossible. Two hundred and fifty of our little band were either killed or entirely disabled; and not a single man of them is there who is not wounded slightly.”

“But Armand did not assist you,” said the father.

“No, because he could not: he was bound in the cart. Hark! what noise is that!”

A shout, or rather yell, that seemed to rend the skies was heard proceeding from the

place of execution. In a moment all was confusion in the streets: the people rushed pell mell towards the river, and in a minute or two the thoroughfare below was perfectly empty.

“Hercule,” cried Pauline, clinging to him, “in heaven’s name go and see what has happened.”

“Do you wish me to see more horror than I have seen?” returned he moodily.

“I shall go, then, if you don’t,” cried Alphonse. “It may be something good for him—who knows.”

They both then descended quickly into the street: and were seen running along at the top of their speed towards the quai. The bell of Notre Dame at this moment rang out a peal which made the hearts of the party at the window leap with expectation. M. Dechappelle was so agitated that he would

have ran down also; but Pauline detained him, saying—

“Father, for Heaven’s sake stay with us.”

In a minute more a trooper came galloping down the street in the direction of the prison. Then appeared a long line of soldiers, who ranged themselves as before along the streets.

“Let us not stay to see his body pass,” muttered the father. “Let us shut the window.”

“I shall remain here till the last,” cried Pauline. “It will then be time to utter our laments. *I* still hope.”

Nothing more was said, and all gazed anxiously out of the window. First came the body of cavalry—then the priests—and then the cart, and in it—was Armand unbound and seated.

“It is he! It is he!” cried Pauline, in a voice of frantic joy; and rushing out into

the balcony, she exclaimed as he passed the window, "Armand! Armand!"

The captive heard her, and rising up he kissed his hand to her passionately, and then, with an air of exhaustion, fell back upon his seat, and the cortège was soon out of sight.

Hercule and Alphonse now came in, their faces radiant with joy.

"He is reprieved," cried Hercule, "and we may see him immediately."

The prison once more enclosed the captive and his friends. Pauline was mad with joy and could speak or think of nothing else. The look of sadness on Armand's face, and his gloomy silence, both astonished and terrified his friends: but it was not long before they received ample explanation.

"My poor girl!" murmured the prisoner. "How can I tell her? Hercule explain to Pauline, let her not hope and be deceived."

“I do not understand you!” said Hercule in a low voice.

“Does none of you know it?” asked Armand wildly.

“Know what, dearest?” cried Pauline, gazing at him in surprise and terror. “You are reprieved and pardoned.”

Armand shook his head.

“Yes,” said he, “I am reprieved. I am not to die, but—”

“Speak, in Heaven’s name!” exclaimed his father.

“I am to be imprisoned in solitary confinement for life!”

“Gracious Heavens!” cried M. Dechapelle: “when will my sorrows cease!”

Pauline’s spirit was at last overcome, and for a moment it seemed as if the Cardinal would have his wish. She lay like a corpse upon the wretched pallet bed allotted for Ar-

mand. Her lover knelt by her, soothing her and entreating her to be calm. But her energy had left her, and instead of listening to reason, or striving to be comforted, she burst forth in wild and heart-rending lamentations.

“Armand—dearest Armand,” she sobbed, “shall I *never* see you again?”

“Hope, my love,” whispered he, though his thoughts belied his words, “never cease to hope. No man can tell what is to happen—none can read the future.”

“No—no, we shall never meet more—never!”

Never! How terrible is that word. A thousand sources of misery—an incalculable amount of woe is bound up in that one idea. If we were here immortal upon earth we could look forward with comparative calmness to a separation of two hundred, two thousand, even

ten thousand years: but were we to contemplate a separation for *ever*, then we should feel all the woe—all the sorrow—all the terrible reality of parting.

When Armand said to his beloved—"We shall meet again,"—did he mean on earth? No. His heart bade him think of no other meeting than one in heaven. An eternal adieu was something so terrible that it could not enter into Pauline's mind. How could she believe that she should *never* see that face again—that she should *never* see those eyes beaming upon her in love and happiness—*never* more hear the music of his voice—*never* more be clasped to his heart?

In the midst of this scene of misery, the bell of the prison tolled eleven. One hour more and the gates of his cell would close out from him for ever all that he held dear on earth. What would life be then to him? A

mockery. A stage without the actors. None spoke—they all sat there in silent wretchedness, waiting for the hour to strike. As the time went on the agony on their faces increased. It was a quarter to twelve—ten minutes—five—the clock chimed for the hour and then began to strike. Armand listened.

One—two—three—four—five—six—seven—eight—nine—ten—eleven—twelve!

And as the door opened Armand fell senseless on the ground by the side of the bed.

“I am sorry to inform you, Monsieur,” said the turnkey, addressing M. Dechappelle, “that I have strict orders not to allow any one to stop after twelve.”

“And is this the last time we can enter?”

“The last time, Monsieur.”

Armand took leave of his friends in a dream; but as the door closed over the fainting form of Pauline, he leapt up, and dashing himself against the iron portal he cried—

“Open!—open!—Help!—help!”

No one, of course, came to him: and sinking on the bed half senseless, he lay there for hours in a state of unconsciousness. He was only roused by the entrance of the jailor with his food, which the man found there in the same place he had left it, when he again came with his evening meal.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE Cardinal de St. Denis was proud of his work. But there was one disappointment that slightly counterbalanced his joy: he was unable to see his victim and triumph over his downfall. Having once altered the sentence, Louis XIII. refused to do so again, and declared that Armand Dechapelle was in solitary confinement and should remain so: and no one should be admitted to see him. However St. Denis learnt from the turnkey the terrible scene at parting, and chuckled over the complete success of his plan.

“If she does not succumb to that,” mut-

tered he to himself, "she must be more than human."

"If you will let me see him," said he, "I will give you twenty livres."

"I never take bribes," returned the turn-key; "for if I did Monsieur Dechappelle would give me twenty thousand livres, to set him free. Besides, he bade me never to let you enter when he *could* see people."

"Indeed! That I think must have been a mistake. Will you take a hundred?"

"I will take nothing," returned the man.

"Then," muttered the priest, "you shall suffer for it."

Armand was informed on the following day that he might send out some letters to his friends, and receive their answers that one day: but that after that all his intercourse with the world must cease. He accordingly wrote to his father and Pauline, entreating

the latter to be hopeful and live for his sake, and begging the former—as his last wish—to live at Naples. He expressed no reason for this: but merely insisted upon it as a thing he had set his heart upon.

He received answers to both, and with them a letter from Cardinal St. Denis. He read as follows:—

“ *Cher Armand*,—At length I have my wish. I have risen, and you have fallen: but that wish did not become fixed in my breast until you over-reached me when a false character. Before that time I had no enmity toward yourself, except as regards Madlle. Pauline. She was, and is the object of my hatred: and to effect her ruin is my purpose in life. I swore to her father that I would revenge on her the injuries he did me, and I mean yet to keep my word. Towards yourself I felt as I have said, not the slightest de-

gree of enmity—not even dislike, as you were powerless to harm me: but now that Pauline has escaped from St. Eustace by your means, I hate you with a deadly hatred. While you are groaning and writhing in your cell, I shall be rolling by in my carriage,—while you are helplessly cursing me in prison I shall be sending out my emissaries in every direction in search of her—and *mark my words*—I shall stop at nothing to accomplish my end.—I should not write thus openly were it not that I know you cannot answer me nor send it to any one to witness against me. Adieu, *mon cher ami*—remember ten men are now on the track of your family, who care not what they do. Your ever devoted friend,

“ST. DENIS.”

“The cowardly villain!” exclaimed Armand, “but this letter shall go to the King, even if I bribe the jailor with half my fortune.”

He was allowed the use of pen and ink—and two or three books—with a lamp swinging from the roof. This was, in some measure, a solace to his captivity: and he took advantage of it immediately. After writing a few hasty lines to the King, he enclosed the letter of the Cardinal, when he had taken a copy of it; and waited impatiently the arrival of the turnkey. At nine he came.

“Maurice,” said Armand, “sit down. I wish to talk with you. How can they call this solitary confinement when I am allowed to see you?”

“I don’t know, Monsieur,” replied the man sitting down, “but I suppose they don’t count me as anybody.”

“Can you convey this letter to the King?” asked Armand.

“It is against orders, Monsieur, and I am afraid I can’t.”

"I will give you two hundred livres," cried Armand, "if you will."

"Well, I'll see," replied the turnkey, putting the letter in his pocket. "I am afraid that you won't stay here long. I heard M. de St. Denis say that you were going far away into the country."

"Indeed!" cried Armand. "Then you won't be with me?"

"No, Monsieur," said Maurice. "The Cardinal will take good care of that."

"Has he any enmity against you, then?" cried Armand. "He seems to quarrel with everybody."

"He wished me to let him in secretly," answered Maurice, "and offered me fifty livres. I told him I didn't think you'd thank me for letting him: and that if I wanted bribes, I had only to come to you, and you would give me twenty thousand to escape."

“Aye, fifty thousand!”

“Would you?” exclaimed the man—“why that is a fortune! I will see what I can do. I shall lose my place—my character, and everything, and—”

“Make your fortune!” added Armand, seeing him in the right vein.

“The King shall have the letter to-night,” returned Maurice, “and I will find out whither you are going.”

“Well, then, here is a livre to drink my health,” said Armand: and as the man went down the passage he tossed the gold in the air, muttering to himself—

“Maurice—you are a made man!”

As for Dechapelle, he did not think this a bad beginning. He had only been in prison one day, and had already begun to work on the turnkey's avarice. But another day passed, and another, and another—a week

passed by and Maurice was still unable to discover whither the prisoner was to be taken. At length, one evening just as it was growing dark, and Armand was buried in the pages of an old monkish volume, the turnkey entered, and shutting the door stealthily behind him said,—

“I have discovered whither you are going, and I have hit upon a plan. The place of your destination is a small island named Melay, near Erguy on the coast of Brittany, where there is a tower of immense strength. I am to go with you, as the King does not desire that it should be known whither you are going. I have a brother now staying with his ship at St. Malo, and if we can escape together we can go to him.”

“What is your brother?”

“My brother is a smuggler,” returned Maurice, “and will be happy to assist you.

If I do not succeed I will not receive one farthing."

"When are we to set out?" inquired Dechapelle.

"To-morrow."

"Did you give my letter to the King?"

"I did," said the turnkey, "and got severely reprimanded for it. I heard, however, something escape him that showed he was glad to receive it. He locked it up in his private box and said to himself, 'that's important.' He then, in a milder tone, bade me be more attentive to my orders in future, and dismissed me."

"Here are the two hundred livres I promised you," cried Armand, handing them over to him. "I have now only a hundred left."

"I won't take them, then, Monsieur," said Maurice; "you can pay me when we escape."

I shall have no need of them. Besides, my having so much money would be very likely to excite suspicion."

"Just as you please," observed Armand, "only I should like to have some wine to-night. I have tasted none for a month."

"I can easily do that," said the jailor, "although even that would get me discharged. It won't be the first time I have done it though. I have got quite a reputation among the prisoners. There was one old man here—he had been in prison thirty years, and when he was set free he didn't like to go. 'Maurice,' says he, 'all my friends will be dead, and I shan't know any one. I wish I were not going, for your sake. You are my only friend.' I had only known him four years too. He was obliged to go though, and he died soon after. I'll be off now for the wine."

That night was a night of excitement for Armand. He sat up late, read, and drank wine, and looked forward with pleasure to his long journey. The green fields; the merry sun; the song of birds; the budding leaves; the hum of cities; the very air breathing around him would be paradise in comparison to his damp and dreary cell.

“If I had never known Pauline—if I had no friends—no parents—no sisters, weeping for me outside, I could be happy here, with my books and my pens. I could write my life. I could store my mind with knowledge which, though useless at present, I could pour forth on paper for the good of mankind. But with my betrothed breaking her heart for me—with my parents pining away in grief—with my sister and, more than brother, Hercule, sorrowing unceasingly, how can I be any-

thing but restless, and disturbed, and unhappy?"

Such were Armand's thoughts as he lay in bed that night, waiting for the morning to relieve him from his captivity—which he looked to with delight though it was but temporary.

CHAPTER XXIV.

It was a lovely morning when the little cortège issued from the gates of Paris. Armand rode in a closed carriage, his turnkey and the driver on the front box, and six soldiers on horseback round. The sun shone merrily down on the green country which was just throwing off its winter covering and assuming the bright dress of spring. Birds were carolling amid the branches, and circling around the trees that boasted but of tiny leaves. Carts were trotting along to market, their drivers whistling and singing national songs,—and as Armand heard their merry

voices, his heart sank within him, and he could have wished to exchange places with the meanest peasant in all France.

On arriving at the first halting place, the person in whose charge he was, was in the extreme of perplexity as to how he should guard his prisoner during the night. The house at which they stopped was an inn of modest dimensions. If the soldiers slept outside any of the rooms in the whole place Armand could escape from the window; and it was, therefore, deemed advisable to cause a guard to keep watch in his chamber all night.

“Monsieur Dechapelle,” said Colonel Dupray, the officer in command, “I have to communicate an unpleasant fact to you. It will be necessary for me to place a soldier on watch in your room at night.”

“I shall certainly not submit to anything

of the sort," cried Armand, "I must beg you not to think of it."

"It is perfectly necessary, Monsieur," returned the Colonel, "and however inconvenient, I am afraid you must submit to it for once. I will take care that at the next halt better quarters shall be provided."

"I cannot sleep with any one in my room," returned Armand. "It is exceeding your orders to place a soldier there. I shall write to the King and complain if anything of the sort is done."

"Remember, Monsieur," cried the officer, irritated at the imperative tone used by Dechapelle, "remember you are a prisoner, and under my orders."

"Not at all, Colonel," returned Armand, "my imprisonment is to be solitary confinement: no one has a right to intrude. However, do as you like—place a soldier there, and I shall write to the King to-morrow."

“Really, Monsieur,” said the officer, changing his tone, “it is most unkind of you. I am placed in a responsible position. If you were to escape in the night what redress have I. You have been a soldier, Monsieur, give me your word of honour not to fly, and that is all I require.”

“In that case I promise not to escape to-night; I do not extend that promise, however, to any other day.”

This satisfied the Colonel, who was in reality only anxious to do his duty, and Armand was left to himself. A soldier, however, was placed before his door and relieved twice during the night. The morning found the prisoner calmly sleeping; for Armand would as soon have slain himself as even thought of breaking his word. The turnkey had little opportunity of seeing the prisoner, but as they entered Brittany he informed him

that as soon as they arrived at St. Malo the attempt must be made. They were going to stop at the town for some reason or other; and at night they must issue forth together—make for the ship, and he would engage that his brother would sail immediately.

It may be imagined that as the carriage rattled over the stoney streets of St. Malo, Armand's heart beat quick. He could hardly imagine that he was to escape so soon—it seemed too good to be true—too Utopian to be realised. Nevertheless he did hope that it might prove true; and as he saw the turnkey leap down from the carriage on their arrival at the place where he was to stay the night he watched him with intense interest. Ten

o'clock was the hour at which he was to appear with his supper, and it was now eight. "Two hours more of suspense," thought Armand—what would he have thought of two years!

At almost half-past nine, Colonel Dupray came into his room and sat down. He evidently had no suspicion that anything was contemplated, and began talking freely.

"We are nearly at the end of our journey," said he. "I should imagine you are fatigued by so long and monotonous a drive?"

"On the contrary, Colonel," returned Armand, "I should much prefer riding about eternally in a carriage to being bound up in a room ten feet by eight."

"You have magnificent ideas," exclaimed the Colonel, laughing, "ten feet by eight. *Ma foi!* the rooms at the Chateau Noir are much less than that. But perhaps you will be allowed a walk on the terrace if you give your word of honour not to escape."

"Now tell me truly, Monsieur," asked Armand, with a smile, "would you give such an assurance to any one if you were in prison?"

"No; I can't say I should, in fact I couldn't keep it if I did," replied the soldier.

"Neither will I; my word of honour is inviolable, and to break it besides, would render me much more unhappy than I should be in prison. I therefore tell you frankly that I shall escape on the first opportunity."

"Quite right, Monsieur—quite right," answered Dupray, "I should do the same. But then the thing is impossible. My duty, of course, will be not to allow you to fly."

"Is the Chateau Noir so very strong then?" enquired Dechapelle.

"Yes; it is indeed. The walls, I believe, are in general thirty feet thick; where you are to be imprisoned they are fifty."

"You are not very comforting, Monsieur Dupray," said Armand.

"No, Monsieur," returned the Colonel, "it

would be wrong for me to give you hopes that can never be realised. Nothing but the clemency of the king will ever bring you back your freedom."

The time passed but slowly—every moment seemed to Armand an age, and at last, as ten struck and no one entered he said in a firm voice:

"Maurice is late to-night; I generally sup before ten."

"Maurice is not in St. Malo at present, M. Armand," said the Colonel, "I sent him this morning to Le Chateau Noir with two soldiers, to prepare your room for you."

"Indeed," cried Armand, expressing an exclamation of disappointment and turning sick at heart. He felt himself growing pale, and therefore said, though in a half choking voice:

"The man who takes his place then, does not, I suppose, know my hours; I must ring."

The Colonel did not notice his change of voice, but saying, 'I will send him,' and 'good night,' he retired. For some minutes after his departure, Armand sat with his face buried in his hands, and was only roused by the entrance of the man with his supper. After he had come and gone, he once more relapsed into the same position. The supper was left untouched, and the lamp burnt pale in the socket—the room became dark and the flickering of the flame, cast gloomy shadows on the ill-made walls. And were his thoughts less gloomy? His last hope of flight seemed now at length gone—his only friend had departed—he was about to enter a tower, impenetrable and inextricable as a labyrinth, and when the prison doors closed over him when would his release come. Never! at least not in this world. There he should pass his days while his youth flourished and fled—

while his hair thinned and grew white—while his limbs grew feeble and his mind weakened—in a word while life remained. No wonder, then, was it that the viands were untouched; that the bed remained unoccupied when such were the thoughts of the captive.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE Château Noir was an ancient castle. It was built round a square court, into which looked most of its windows, while a few only opened upon the dark blue sea, which almost washed the basement of one of the four towers that stood at its corners. Two of these four towers possessed characteristic names—the Red Tower and the Black Tower. The former was for the reception of criminals destined for execution; the latter for those who were to suffer perpetual imprisonment. It well deserved its name; its dark and gloomy walls, covered with the moss and blackened

with the winds of ages, rose frowningly on the margin of the waters. Here and there only could be descried a small barred window where some miserable captive was pining out his days in misery and hopelessness.

The dungeons beneath the level of the sea were cold, damp, and fearfully enwrapped in darkness. Only the very vilest criminals were imprisoned in them. Then succeeded a floor on which lived the jailor and his family, and then recommenced the cells, which were placed round a spiral staircase, ascending from the bottom to the very top of the tower. Each room was about eight feet by seven, and though made of stone and possessing no furniture besides a table, a chair, and a pallet bed, were not perfectly destitute of all comfort.

On the same floor that contained the rooms of the keepers of the prison, was a large room, the contents of which plainly showed

that the Chateau Noir had not always been a prison, since the apartment was none other than a banqueting room. In the midst stood an old oaken table with a few chairs around it, the others having been removed for the use of the rest of the castle. A few old pictures worn much were on the walls, and the frames of some of them, neglected and eaten up with dust and time, were almost falling to pieces.

What were the most singular features in the room, however, were some suits of old armour, which stood as if possessed by their former occupants, upright in their places. They were rusty and eaten by age, but were yet in better condition than almost anything else in the apartment, if we except the table and chairs, which were as if they had just been brought to the castle. The floor was rather worn, and notched by the feet of its

old inmates, but the oaken board was in high preservation, although it had groaned beneath the weight of many a knightly feast.

When Armand Dechapelle gazed upon the Red and Black Towers, and was informed of their several uses, he could almost have wished that fate was conducting him to the former. But a crowd of associations banished all such thoughts, and hope once more sat enthroned in his heart. His destination, however, somewhat alarmed him. Instead of being immured in one of the dark and noisome oubliettes beneath the castle, where no ray of light had penetrated since the building of the edifice, he was to be placed in a cell light and airy, and situated on the very highest story of the Black Tower.

Armand knew well that this was not done for the sake of affording him better quarters, or a more healthy situation. He understood

the reason for it. In one of the dungeons he could bore and work his way through the rock—in a cell at the very summit of a high and inaccessible turret no means of escape was before him. If he forced his way through the window—if he broke through the roof—if he bored through the masonry, he would find on all sides a wall, steep and precipitous—beneath him a stone court, the jagged rock, or the rolling sea, at the depth of two hundred feet.

“Monsieur Armand,” said Maurice, when they reached the top and sat down, fatigued from the ascent of so many steps, “you must not blame me for the mistake at St. Malo. I had two soldiers with me, and it was impossible to elude them.”

“I do not blame you, Maurice,” replied Dechappelle, “but it is now all over with me I fear. How can any one who cannot fly escape from a room such as this.”

The man looked out.

"It is impossible," cried he; "but yet some other means may present themselves."

"Are you head turnkey here?" asked Armand.

"Oh! no, Monsieur," replied the man; "in that case there would have been nothing at all to be done, There is a man named Gregoire Tullier and his family down below, who have it all their own way. I am here only as under turnkey, my principal duty being to attend on you."

"And I wonder why that is?" exclaimed Dechappelle.

"I can easily explain it, Monsieur," said Maurice; "they do not wish Gregoire to know who you are, or what riches you possess, for fear he might be tempted. They imagine that as I did not set you free at Paris I am not to be bribed. I am glad they put such faith in me, for now I can work out my plans."

"Have you any?" asked Armand.

"No, Monsieur, not at present. I have not yet seen the tower all over. It may take months, but you shall be free. I feel somehow or other an affection for you; and besides, the money you have promised me will make my fortune. I am now only twenty-five; if it took five years I should be then only thirty, and I could marry Julie even then."

"You are then the same age as myself," said Armand.

"Are you so young?" exclaimed the turnkey involuntarily.

Armand smiled.

"No doubt," cried he, "I look older than I am. I have known a prisoner when sentenced, reprieved, and sentenced again, as I have been, lose his life, or at least his senses."

"I beg pardon, Monsieur, for saying what I did," returned Maurice, grieved at the melan-

choly words of the prisoner, "but I spoke without thinking."

"Never mind, Maurice; but if you could obtain a mirror I should like to see my face. I have not done so for three or four months."

"I will try, M. Dechapelle; but I must go down or Gregoire will suspect I am your friend."

When Maurice had gone Armand stood by his little window and gazed out. There were no bars to it, for his enemies well knew that no human being could escape from it with life. Beneath rolled the sea, glancing merrily beneath the beams of a noonday sun, bearing on its heaving bosom the forms of many a light bark. Here sea birds skimmed along the waves, alighted on the mast of some bounding vessel, flew off again, circled round it, and then shot away into the blue expanse of heaven.

How the prisoners of the Chateau Noir, as they gazed out of their solitary windows, must have envied those birds in their freedom! Truly, freedom is the greatest blessing mankind has bestowed upon it. Wealth—titles—power—are nothing in comparison with that feeling within us that tells us we are free. Happiness itself is below it! A slave who enjoys wealth—distinction—power—luxury—but who is yet liable to be called upon for a reckoning to a master, is not, in my opinion, to be compared with the meanest wretch, who picking rags about the streets, and earning just sufficient to keep body and soul together, can yet say—"I am free!"

Armand thought as I do and would willingly have exchanged places with the commonest seaman in the fishing smacks that passed the tower. But there was one thing which in the exchange he would not throw

into the balance. His love of Pauline rose even above his wish for freedom. To possess the love of a being such as she was, though in a dungeon, was better in his mind, than to be as free as the air and to be unloved by any. Yes, there is one thing almost as good as freedom, and that is love!

CHAPTER XXVI.

A few books, paper, pen, and ink, a chair and a bed, such constituted the furniture of Armand's chamber. It was very light and a nice breeze from the sea made it extremely pleasant in the hot long days of summer. It was particularly necessary to have a great deal of air, as being next to the roof the rays of the sun poured fiercely down upon the flat stones, and rendered it at mid day almost insupportably hot.

Armand, however, felt the want of a companion. To have no one through the long dreary day to speak to—to hear no voice but

that of the wave or of the wind was sufficient in itself to make his imprisonment more dismal than anything, save death itself. Maurice was unable to remain long with him for fear of exciting suspicion, and Armand would not hazard his chances of escape for the sake of a few conversations.

One day as he was gazing out of the window he noticed a nest built within reach of his hand under the eaves of the roof. "At length," he cried, "I have a companion," and breaking up some pieces of bread he put two or three small crumbs in the bird's frail habitation, and some more on the sill of the window. Armand then retired back into the room, and presently, the sparrow seeing no danger, flew back to the nest. He could not, however, be coaxed to perch on the windowsill. This, however, was so much gained. After a few days Dechappelle could put bits

of bread into the nest, while the bird only perched on the eave, and at last the little creature ventured to alight for a moment on the sill, and then, as if astounded at its own boldness, quickly retreated back to its home.

It was with inexpressible pleasure that Armand witnessed the gradual taming of his companion. Anything endowed with life brings a certain degree of friendship with it, and a certain degree of friendship hence sprang up between Armand and the sparrow. It would perch on the table as he ate his breakfast; it would eat crumbs off a plate and not be frightened if he took it in his hand.

But to accomplish this was the task of months, and it was July when the little bird first perched upon his table. March had passed,—and April, and May, and June,

—and no sign of escape, not even a word from Maurice as to its possibility. Whenever he inquired of him he would say:

“Well, M. Dechapelle, I really haven’t thought of anything yet. Everything is so gloomy here—even Gregoire himself—that you can’t learn anything.”

July passed, and August came laughing with its ruddy fruit and golden corn. Merrily the labourers gathered in the harvest, and merrily they danced at the harvest home. But the prisoner in his cell was the same. There was no change for him except that the sun shone brighter, and the air felt warmer, and he thought of glorious Italy that now contained, he doubted not, all the beings he loved upon earth.

September, October, November, went by, and December once more reigned upon the earth. Drearily the snow beat against his

window, and he thought of the night when in the depth of winter he was lying a condemned captive in the cell of the Conciergerie. He remembered vividly the events of that night; the dream was fresh in his memory, and he thanked heaven that the visionary crime was not a reality. Cold and dreary were the winter nights in the cell of the Black Tower; but late into the hours of darkness the captive sat buried in some old volume or writing down his thoughts and his aspirations. Far out at sea the light of his solitary lamp was a guide to the little fishing smacks of St. Malo.

“If,” thought Armand, “I die in prison I will entrust this manuscript to Maurice, and by giving him a large sum of money I shall induce him to take it to Pauline. My father or my brother Hercule will give it to the world, and it will be seen by Louis or his successors that tyrants may make a captive of

the body, but the mind will remain as free—as unbounded as ever.”

Winter passed, and Spring came once more with its early blossoms and its early flowers. For a whole year Armand had not seen a flower, and he was greatly touched when Maurice brought him one morning with his breakfast a bunch of snowdrops.

“Thank you, Maurice,” cried Armand, shaking him by the hand, “you could not have brought me anything that delights me more than a flower. I have not seen one before for a year.”

“Would you like to have a root or two, monsieur,” said the turnkey.

“Yes, above all things,—it would be delightful. Cannot you bring me one to-morrow?”

“I will try, monsieur.”

Next morning, before the arrival of the

turnkey, when Armand was lying awake in bed thinking, he heard a tap at the window. It was his sparrow. He leapt out of bed, opened the casement, and let the bird in. In its mouth was a straw, so that he had no doubt of the reason of its entrance. It wished to build a nest in the room. The sparrow, after searching round the room, fixed upon a dark corner where the stones were loose, and commenced its building. In the course of a short time its nest was finished and the bird took up his residence there with its mate.

Meantime Maurice had brought the roots, and a little earth, and on the sill of the captive's window there soon appeared, as Spring advanced, a variety of choice flowers. Armand took immense pains with his little garden, for the sight of a flower reminded him of the Chateau of the Three Fountains, the days of his boyhood, and the walks he had enjoyed

amid the budding blossoms with Pauline, whom, in all human probability, he should never behold again. He did not give way to despondency, however, and as the year passed and his birthday came round he said to himself:

“This is my twenty-sixth birthday. Well, I am yet young.”

It was on the evening of the 10th of June, 1623, that Maurice entered his room with a look of pleasure on his countenance.

“This is my birthday,” said Armand, with a melancholy smile, “congratulate me on my happiness.”

“Do not be downcast, monsieur,” said the turnkey; “I think I have a plan which will succeed. It will take time, perhaps, but yet I imagine it cannot fail of attaining its object.”

“What is it?” inquired Armand, eagerly.

“That is what I don’t want to tell, Mon-

sieur," said Maurice, "until I am more certain. But this I know, that it will take a little money."

"I am ready to give you that," replied Armand, unlocking a drawer. "What are you going to buy?"

"I am going to buy a skeleton," answered Maurice, slightly laughing.

"That's a curious thing: but I suppose you have your use for it. Here are fifty livres: you can dispose of them as you like."

"I shall not want so much as that," said the turnkey: "but the next thing I must do is to get into the good graces of Gregoire. I shall make him carouse often: and that he is very fond of. But the most provoking thing is, that the fellow won't get drunk."

"Then what are you going to do?" asked Dechappelle.

“ Well, Monsieur, if you insist—”

“ Not at all, Maurice. You can do as you please, so as you get me out of this accursed cell. I think another year would see me at the bottom of the sea beneath my window.”

“ Hope on, Monsieur—the time will come soon to act: till then trust in me.”

Armand rose early—tended his flowers, fed the sparrow, breakfasted, read from a volume of monkish traditions, thought and wrote, had the interview with his jailor above recorded, gazed out upon the dark blue sea while the sun set and the moon silvered the waves, and the stars beamed out in the sky, then, with a sigh he threw himself on his pallet bed to catch his sleep.

So passed the birthday of the prisoner of the Black Tower.

CHAPTER XXVII.

It could not be said that the Cardinal St. Denis was received as usual at the Palace of Louis XIII. The King had no doubt of the authenticity of the letter sent to him by Armand Dechapelle: but though he determined to make him feel his displeasure, he feared openly to accuse him, protected as he was by the authority of the Pope. He was glad he had crushed so dangerous an enemy as Armand, but yet he saw the meanness and duplicity of the priest so plainly that it was impossible to ignore it. When, therefore, St. Denis called on him as usual, a short time

after the sentence of perpetual imprisonment had been passed on Dechapelle, the monarch received him very coldly.

“Your Majesty seems displeased with me,” said the Cardinal, alarmed and annoyed.

“Do you know that letter?” was the answer of Louis, as he handed him the cowardly missive he had sent to the prisoner.

The Cardinal turned very white—he would have torn up the letter but that that would be an accusation. Besides he knew the King too well not to fear his vengeance. To deny it was impossible, as his signature was unmistakeable.

“I do, Sire,” said he, “it is one I forwarded to the traitor, Dechapelle, whom you have so mercifully reprieved. How it came into your possession is to me a source of astonishment.”

“Very likely,” replied Louis, drily—“very likely. You do not understand how we obtain

information. It is enough that we possess it, and that you acknowledge your having written and sent it."

"What purpose would it serve, Sire," cried the Cardinal, feigning wonder, "if I were to deny a letter in which I can see nothing to disapprove of?"

"Most probably," answered the King, "you did not see anything in it to disapprove of, or you would not have sent it. There is no difficulty in understanding that, and therefore I do not seek any information on the subject. But what I wish to be told is how you dare to come into my presence when you know that you are a forger—a murderer—and a thief!"

St. Denis leaped from his chair.

"Sire," exclaimed he, turning pale, as much with fear as with rage, "if you were not my king you should pay dearly for this insult."

"I do not fear your wrath Monsieur le

Cardinal," answered the King calmly; "I know you are too good and too prudent a subject to risk exciting my anger."

"I fear no man," cried the Cardinal.

"Very likely, not at present; but if I were to feel inclined to release Armand Dechapelle and put you in his place, would you fear me then?"

St. Denis looked uneasily towards the door.

"The door is open, M. le Cardinal," continued the King, "and you are at liberty now; but if ever I see you again in this palace, by Heavens! you shall never quit it."

The Cardinal rose.

"Adieu, Sire," said he, "the Pope my master, is powerful, he will avenge my wrongs."

"I hope you don't treat the Pope in the same way as you do me," said the King;

“for if you do I shall not have much to fear from him.”

Although St. Denis was overwhelmed with anger and fear at this sudden change in the manner of the King towards him, he was too fond of himself, and too confident in his own powers to allow it to trouble him long. The next week found him considering how best to retire from Paris, and live somewhere where he could be more at rest, where, in fact, he might have more leisure to plot, conspire, and intrigue. His agents were now in all directions searching for M. Dechappelle's family, and he hoped soon to be able to accomplish the end of his life—the destruction of Pauline and her friends.

He pitched upon a beautiful chateau on the banks of the river Seine, about sixty miles from Paris. It was surrounded by gardens, and lovely grounds, which came down to the

water's edge. One wing of the mansion was occupied by the Cardinal himself, while the other was devoted to the use of Roderigo. They rarely took their walks together, the young man, who could not but see the wickedness and criminal conduct of his father, had an instinctive dread of being near him; and though whenever he met him, he behaved to him as a son should, the cordiality, the affection, the love which should be seen between parent and child existed not.

One afternoon the Cardinal was seated in his study writing, when a servant entered, bringing three letters. St. Denis smiled as he gazed on the handwritings, two were from spies, the third he knew not. The last he opened first. It was to inform him that a rich nobleman had died, leaving him, "for the use of the Church," his whole fortune.

"Good," smiled the Cardinal, as he tore open the second.

This was from a spy in Brittany. It had been discovered by their secret agent that Armand meditated an escape from the Black Tower, and that the jailor was in his confidence.

"Good again," muttered the Cardinal, and he opened the third.

Better news than all awaited him. Pauline was in Naples with all her friends. The number of the house and its situation was exactly described, and every minute particular given to prove the accuracy of the statement.

"Better still," exclaimed St. Denis, taking some paper: and he commenced writing two letters which he sealed and placed in his drawer.

"To-morrow," cried he, "I will defeat all their plans."

To-morrow!

Having done this he rang the bell and or-

dered his carriage. Then he put on his riding suit: descended to the portico of his splendid mansion, and leapt into the vehicle. The man inquired where he should drive?

“To the Chateau Masserail,” cried he, and in another moment the two splendid bays that bore on the carriage sprung gaily forward.

“I should have thought it impossible to have so much good fortune in a single day,” said the priest to himself, as they crossed a little wooden bridge over the river just opposite the Chateau, “Pauline found, a plot discovered—an inheritance gained! Surely I am the child of good luck.”

The Chateau Masserail was inhabited by a widow lady and her daughter, a beautiful girl of nineteen years. In the course of a few months the Cardinal had made their acquaintance—established himself a constant visitor—

a friend of the family, and had partially succeeded in persuading Helene to take the veil. It was not done openly, but by insidious means—by representations—by anecdotes—by observations let fall as if by accident. Father Pierre was too wise a man to advise openly—besides it would have been useless, as Madame Masserail was entirely opposed to her daughter's assuming the conventual garb.

Roderigo had occasionally visited there. He was the same age as Helene, and her beauty—her accomplishments—her affectionate manner to her mother—her modesty had formed in him a strong love for her. His father unheeding this, or perhaps not having observed it, persisted in his design, and it was one of his visits of outward courtesy that he was now engaged in making. He found his intended victim and her mother at home, and staid with them till the dusk of the

evening. The rain began to pour down in torrents, and it was not long before a storm of tremendous violence began. The thunder boomed loud and the lightning flashed brilliantly over the beautiful country. But above all the wind blew in terrific gusts, sweeping round the turrets of the old Chateau, and rushing down the wide openings with a loud roar.

As the storm increased in violence for some time the Cardinal was detained until it was quite dark at the Chateau, and then, as there was a lull in the elements, he departed in high spirits, thanking his friends warmly for their hospitality.

"Had you not after all better remain here for the night," asked the widow. "There is a bed-room in the left wing of the Chateau very comfortably fitted up."

"No; I thank you, Madame," replied the

Cardinal, "I am anxious to reach home to-night. Besides the horses are to the carriage. Adieu, Madame! adieu Mdlle. Helene."

And St. Denis sped homewards to be prepared for his errand of vengeance on the morrow.

The storm had ceased, and the wind now moaned querulously amid the branches, as if complaining that it was not allowed to complete its task of destruction. It was only a lull, however, and presently the wind once more had its way, and the lightning once more writhed itself round the trees.

"Drive on faster," cried the Cardinal, "the storm has begun again."

The man had no need of the injunction, for the horses terrified by a tremendous clap of thunder and a stream of lightning that seemed to rush before their faces, dashed away with irresistible speed. The only thing that the

coachman could do was to keep them straight, and away they fled towards the bridge, the carriage rolling from side to side in its rapid flight.

What was it that made the driver redouble his exertions to stop the animals? What was it that made the Cardinal struggle to open the door as they approached the river? The clear running waters of the Seine lay before them—the bridge had been swept away by the storm! In the darkness of the night the coachman saw his peril too late, and in another moment there were two cries of agony, a crash and a heavy plunge into the waters, and the Cardinal, unable to extricate himself from the carriage, sank to rise no more. The driver escaped by swimming to the shore, to tell the tale to his young master.

Bad as his father had been, Roderigo was shocked and grieved at this catastrophe. He

ordered the servants immediately to follow him with torches; and rushing away to the shore he was soon joined by a motley group of people. It was, however, too late: the body of the Cardinal was after much difficulty extricated from the ruin of the carriage, and borne quite lifeless to the Chateau. Retribution, though tardy, had at length come, and a terrible one it was.

Roderigo gave up the Chateau in which his father had lived, and retired to another on the other side of the river, near that of the Widow Masserail. He made restitution to as many victims of his father's villany as he could find, and found when he had done so that he had still a large income remaining. Mademoiselle Helene, relieved from the influence of Father Pierre, gave up all idea of the veil, and in a year after the Cardinal's death, their marriage was celebrated in the village church.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ARMAND DECHAPELLE one day received a packet from the jailor, which had been given him clandestinely by a young man who spoke with an Italian accent. The messenger was evidently Roderigo, and on his opening the roll of papers he had no doubt any further about it. There were the letters of M. Lefevre—the will—the story of St. Denis's guilt—and every proof necessary to ruin the enemy who had so long troubled him. There was also a letter from Roderigo himself:—

“MON TRES CHER ARMAND,

“I entrust the accompanying papers

to you, relying firmly on your friendship and your generosity. I know they belong properly to yourself, but I shall be sure of your not publishing them to the world, for my sake, as my poor father is dead——”

“Dead!” exclaimed Armand, with emotion, “and we were enemies!”

“Be assured, my dear friend,” continued the letter, “that if money can be of any service in aiding your escape, all I have is at your command. I shall do nothing, however, without your advice, for fear of interfering with any plans you may already have formed. My poor father was killed in a terrible storm that lately swept over this part of France. He was returning home, but not having been informed that the bridge had been carried away by the wind, he went over the edge into the river, and carriage and all were dashed to pieces in the water. Although he

has spent such a life, I cannot help grieving for him. He may, however, have been saved by his death from committing any further sins. Remember, all my fortune is at your command, and believe me, my benefactor and best friend, yours till death,

“ROEERIGO ST. DENIS.

“Chateau St. Denis, June, 1623.”

“Poor wretch!” cried Armand: “he is at last gone.”

There is, perhaps, nothing so sad—nothing so awful, as to hear of the death of one with whom you have all your life been at enmity; excepting, of course, the loss of a dear and valued friend. There is something terrible in the remembrance that your foe has departed for ever from the world with a heart burning with hatred towards you—that his last breath perhaps pronounced your name in anger. Armand felt this, and although he was not

himself imbued with hatred for St. Denis, yet he could not be said to like him. He despised his character and abhorred his actions: while the Cardinal whatever he might say had hated him with the utmost intensity. If Armand had known what schemes he was concocting a few hours preceding his decease, he would have imagined that a special Providence had been working in his favour.

Now that his enemy was dead, however, Dechapelle resolved not to touch his memory but let it be supposed by the world that the Cardinal was an injured and calumniated man. To one, however, he resolved to show these papers if he should escape—and that one was Pauline. There was the letter written by Albert Favier to M. Lefevre; the will calling upon his daughter to marry Armand; the legacy; everything that had been lost now recovered—although when too late to be of any service.

Meanwhile the turnkey was getting on very good terms with Gregoire his fellow jailor; and many was the carouses and the evenings that they had together in the old banqueting hall. The walls which had once resounded with the cheers—the acclamations—the merry songs of the feudal barons, now echoed with the hoarse laugh of the two keepers of the prison. The board which had groaned beneath the weight of many a lordly feast, now received the humble fare of two turnkeys: and the oaken chairs which had rested many an old knight and fair lady, now received the burly form of Gregoire or the slim figure of Maurice.

“Gregoire,” said the latter, one evening, “I have got a very bad bed-room. I wish you would let me sleep here?”

“Sleep here!” cried the other in surprise, “Why I wouldn’t sleep here for ten thousand livres.”

"What! are you afraid?" asked Maurice, laughing.

"No—no, not afraid;" said Gregoire, solemnly, "but I have got a kind of superstition about the place. I wouldn't stay by myself—no not for the world!"

"Well, my good Gregoire," replied Maurice, "I don't want you to sleep here. I want it myself. I am not at all superstitious."

"Oh! take it, and go to the devil with it if you like!" cried Gregoire, "but its growing dark. I don't stop here after the lamp grows dim. I'm not a bit afraid, mind you; but I have an idea against it."

"Well, then, stay up for me in your own room," said Maurice, "for I want to go out."

"What can take you out such a night as this? it's rainy."

"No. 40 is very ill: and I'm going to

Doctor Von Schiefen for the medicine. Good night. Stop up, I shan't be gone long."

And the jailor, wrapped in an immense cloak, walked out of the prison yard into the streets. He thanked Heaven that the night was so bad as to necessitate his wearing this covering, at it would enable him to take into the prison, unperceived, what he was now about to fetch. He threaded some narrow alleys until he came out upon the quay near where a small vessel was anchored, and unfastening a boat, rowed stealthily towards the ship.

"Who goes there?" cried a voice well-known to the turnkey, as he ascended the side.

"Maurice," was the answer.

The man then silently clambered up the ropes at the side of the craft, and was welcomed by a tall and rather good looking sailor.

“Well, brother,” cried the latter, “is all right? I am a day behind my time as it is.”

“You must wait three days more. On Thursday night at ten o’clock we shall be here, or if not, you may go. It will then be all over with us.”

“Are you sure of the fifty thousand livres?” said the turnkey’s brother.

“Oh, yes. He is worth half-a-million, but it seems a shame to take so much from a poor prisoner like him.”

“Why, to be sure it does. But then, if he insists, why then—”

“Why, then it would be unkind to refuse,” philosophically returned Maurice. “However, it grows late. I want something which I think you can get.”

“What is that?”

“A skeleton.”

"A skeleton! That's something curious. But it's all right. Here, Bernard."

"Yes, Monsieur."

"I want a skeleton—you understand. There is a boat."

In about half-an-hour or a little more the man returned from the shore.

"Have you got what we want?" asked the smuggler.

"Yes, captain, here it is."

"And where did you get it?" he inquired.

"From the cemetery," returned the man.

Maurice shuddered. He was a brave man, but the idea of disturbing the bones of the dead almost made him regret his designs.

"Good night," he cried, as in spite of his reluctance, he placed the skeleton under his cloak, and descended into the boat. It was not long before he arrived at the Black Tower,

and after saying "Good night" to Gregoire, who suspected nothing, he locked himself up in the old banqueting hall.

Maurice, however, did not intend that night to retire to rest. He worked hard at his skeleton, and when at the dead of the night all were asleep in the prison, he crept stealthily up to Armand's room, and rousing him, quietly begged him to dress and descend.

"Are we to escape to-night?" inquired De-chapelle, in an eager whisper.

"No, but I want your help in making preparations for it. Do not speak more yet, but descend like a mouse."

The two went down quietly to the banqueting hall, and commenced their work. What would anyone have thought had they been spectators of that scene? There were two men seated on the ground engaged in joining

together the bones of an old skeleton. The lamps burnt dimly, and threw a feeble light over the room, while Maurice was explaining in a low tone the plan he had fixed upon. Surely they would have been mistaken for two madmen.

CHAPTER XXIX.

ALTHOUGH Armand was overcome with joy at a chance of escape, he could not but feel that the plan of Maurice was a clumsy one. It might succeed, but there were ten chances to one that it would not. He worked, however, with earnestness at the task allotted him, and only returned to his room when dawn warned him to do so. He made all his preparations for flight, and occupied himself during the whole of the next day in this manner, and in writing a long letter to the King. It was now Sunday; before Friday came he would either be free or irretrievably lost; for if Maurice was unsuc-

cessful he would of course be detected as an accomplice, and Armand would thus lose the only friend capable of doing him any service.

On Tuesday evening the jailor and Maurice were sitting together as usual in the banquetting hall. The latter by imperceptible degrees brought the subject round to the chamber itself, and then in a careless way he remarked—

“Can you tell me the story of any of the former occupiers of these suits of armour?”

“Yes,” said Gregoire, giving a slight shudder, and draining off a tumbler of wine, “I’ll tell you the story of that one,” pointing to an old rusty suit that stood in a dark corner; “I don’t much like it, but they can’t harm me. I’m not afraid.”

Drinking off another glass, an unusual thing for him, he began—

“The baron who in old times possessed this

castle was named the Baron de Chateaurait. He was an austere, cruel man, and was hated as well as feared by his family and the tenants of his vast estate. Rich—powerful—unscrupulous—he was yet the victim of unhappiness; and though he endeavoured, by marrying a young and beautiful girl, to make his chateau less lonely, he found it impossible.

“Its gloomy walls—its intricate and dark corridors—its isolated position—its prison aspect—might have suited a man of the Baron de Chateaurait’s temperament, but it did not suit Louiso his wife. She often complained to him of its sad appearance, and its melancholy situation; but remonstrances and entreaties were alike useless. He would not stir from the spot. He never allowed her to visit the mainland; and whenever she implored him to take her to La Belle France even for a day, he accused her of wishing to desert him.

“In the course of time they had one child—the only one they ever did have—and it was a daughter. Beautiful indeed she was, more so than her mother; and her merry laugh, and her pleasant voice as she grew up, at length reconciled the mother to her island home. Observing this change, the Baron was more kind to his wife, but his nature was not altered. He could still have sacrificed her if she had attempted forcibly to disobey him.”

“Here, Maurice,” said Gregoire, “give me another glass. This story makes me feel cold.”

“Well, the young Hortense grew up, and a lovely girl she was. Her father, however did not design her to be the ‘plaything of any man,’ as he termed it, but desired that she should enter a convent.

“The mother, however, had no such inten-

tion, and not having been informed of her husband's wish, she encouraged to the Chateau a young Count de Monsigny to whom Hortense soon became attached. The Baron noticed with what intention the young man was invited, and thought it high time to interfere. He sent for his wife, therefore, one day into his private room and said—

“I suppose, Madame, you are fully aware of my intentions with regard to our daughter.”

“No, my lord, I am not,” replied the Baroness, meekly.

“I intend her to enter a convent, madame,” he continued, then perceiving the sudden paleness that overspread his wife's face, he added, “If you think it advisable to invite the young Count here, do so; but she can never marry him.”

“I shall endeavour, my lord,” returned the wife, warmly, “to dissuade you from this, and

if not then, I shall induce Hortense to marry under any circumstances."

"Thank you, madame, for your condescension to me," replied the Baron, drily, "and I will persuade her the other way. We shall see who succeeds the better."

"We shall, my lord," said the Countess, firmly. "I trust that you may relent and that I may triumph."

"Nothing is impossible, madame; that is all the comfort I can give you; everything that is possible is not probable."

"From this day forth there was a marked change in the manner of Chateaurait towards Monsigny—he was more hearty—more cordial to him than before, and appeared to take a pleasure in his society. It was but a month after the interview that the Baron announced his intention of giving a grand tournament, to which he intended to invite all the nobility

around. He ordered two splendid suits of armour to be made—one for himself and one for the Count, for which he received a profusion of thanks; and the Baroness imagined that her persuasion had had some influence on her husband, and that after all, the lovely Louise could not be doomed for ever to the gloomy walls of a convent.

“The day of the tournament arrived; and the Count de Monsigny dressed in resplendent armour entered the room, where the Baroness and her daughter were awaiting the time for their appearing at the lists. His visor was not closed. After bidding them adieu he endeavoured to close his helmet, but it refused to do so.

“My dearest Hortense,” said he, “may I ask a favour at your hands. It would be an omen of my good fortune this day if you would close my visor for me.” The lovely girl rose

and seeing a spring by which the helmet was made to close locked it, and the visor shut with a noise. Hardly had it done so when the Count staggered and in another moment fell lifeless on the floor.

“The Baron entered at the moment.

“Learn,” cried he, looking fiercely at the terrified women, “how I punish those who disobey me.”

“He then departed and entered the lists as if nothing had happened.

“It was in vain they endeavoured to open the armour that enclosed the murdered Count. It refused to be undone; but when at length after the Baron’s death it was broken open, a skeleton was found in it, and it seemed that the poor young man was strangled the instant the visor was closed.

“Hortense now went voluntarily into a convent, and the Baroness did not live long after

this tragical event. Chateaurait himself remained in the island till a good old age, and died regretting the consequences of his intemperate and savage passions. That is the spring armour in the corner. It makes me tremble when I think of it; give me another glass."

Maurice shuddered as he poured out the wine.

"You are afraid," cried Gregoire.

"You mistake me," answered Maurice, quickly, and he told the truth. He was shuddering at the probable consequences of his first plan, and he thanked heaven for having made him relinquish it. He had intended to encase Armand in that very suit! What would have been the result?

"Oh, no, I don't," said Gregoire, who was himself the most superstitious coward in existence, "I knew my story would make you quake."

"I'll soon prove to you that I am not afraid," said Maurice, and going up to the armour he was about to touch it when Gregoire pulled him back.

"Pray don't—pray don't touch it," cried he in alarm.

"Why not?"

"Because if you do we shall see his ghost," whispered the jailor, with his face pale and quivering with excitement.

"See here."

And Maurice touched the fatal vizor and it sprung open, disclosing an empty helmet. The jailor could hardly speak with terror, but kept repeating as he made his hasty exit that in two or three days they would see the ghost of the Count de Monsigny.

"I sincerely hope you may," said Maurice to himself, as he commenced working at his skeleton.

CHAPTER XXX.

AT the usual time Armand descended from his room, and assisted Maurice in his task. He still however did not understand why they could not detain Gregoire and escape before he had time to make a disturbance.

“Do you not remember,” whispered Maurice, as he fitted the vizor over the skull, “that there are numbers of soldiers below who would detain us. We must frighten Gregoire so as to make him rush out and then the soldiers will not have time to examine very closely the faces that run by.”

“I see now,” said Armand, “I imagine I

am to dress in your clothes, and run fast after the jailor?"

"Precisely—you can wear my long cloak, my hat which is so peculiar as to ensure your not being discovered, and run by after him, the soldiers will never notice you: they would not dare to stop me."

"But how will you manage to follow me yourself? Supposing I escape they will perceive that you do not return, and will immediately suspect if you come out from the interior of the prison."

"We must trust in Providence for that," said Maurice. "You understand what you are to do and say in this room. All I hope is that our machinery will act. It is impossible to try it or I should be found out. The noise would be terrific."

"I had better meet you near the prison," observed Armand, working away all the

time, "for I should not know which ship to enter."

"Right," said the turnkey, "I will be with you at the gate opposite the Chateau. There is a dark porch that will hide you effectually."

It may be imagined that Armand during Wednesday and Thursday was in a state of great excitement. Maurice also, although he endeavoured to retain his self-possession, was extremely fidgetty and anxious all day, and Dechappelle feared that his eagerness to spend the evening in the old hall would cause Gregoire to suspect something unusual.

The evening came; and Armand, as soon as the old prison was enveloped in darkness, slipped down enveloped in the turnkey's cloak and hat, and took his station behind the suit of armour, where there was a kind of recess, entirely wrapped in obscurity. As soon as all was arranged, Maurice went in search of

Gregoire, who, by the lapse of two days, had been made to forget his prediction.

“Gregoire,” said the turnkey, “I have got some capital wine in the hall. Come and sit with me, as I wish to tell you something important.”

There was a slight tremor in his voice, but the jailor did not notice it, replying—

“Very well; I will be with you in a moment.”

Maurice entered the room alone, and Armand’s heart sank within him as he perceived it, but presently the heavy step of Gregoire was heard approaching, and coming in, he shut the door behind him. The conversation at first turned upon common topics, but at length Maurice by imperceptible stages changed it, and began to come to the point.

“Gregoire,” said he, “ever since you told me that horrible story I have been unable to

sleep. Last night I fancied I heard a noise in the room."

"Nonsense," replied Gregoire, moving uneasily in his chair, "it must have been fancy."

"No, indeed it was not, and after what you related to me I can tell you I was somewhat terrified."

As if to show the reality of his fear, he looked fearfully over his shoulder.

"What was it like?" cried Gregoire, draining and filling a bumper.

"It sounded like the scraping of bones in armour," whispered Maurice, in a sepulchral voice.

"That could never have been here," said Gregoire piteously, "for the armour is empty, as we saw the other night."

"Yes, but after what you said about ghosts returning," muttered the turnkey

over the table, "I really thought it might be true."

"Hark! what's that?" exclaimed Gregoire, convulsively clutching the table.

"Nothing but fancy," cried Maurice, filling a glass, but affecting to tremble. "It's the wind."

The lamp was burning dimly, and cast feeble rays over the vast hall. Every corner was enveloped in darkness, and as the light flickered in the socket, fantastic shadows seemed to be dancing over the walls, the ceiling, and the floor. The pieces of old armour stood erect and motionless; three of them could only be distinguished by the flashing of the lamp on their bright steel; the old rusty suit of the murdered Count was nearer to the table, and could be seen distinctly, though behind it all was veiled in darkness. Gregoire was in an ecstasy of terror. He set

with his glass in one hand, while with the other he grasped the table convulsively, looking all the while with starting eyes to where the noise had proceeded.

Presently a click was heard, and the two men saw the visor raised, disclosing a grinning skeleton. Gregoire seemed chained to his seat in speechless terror; a slight gurgling noise was heard in his throat, but his voice failed him. Maurice, half rising, affected extreme fear, and stared wildly at the lifeless skull.

“Who are you that dare to disturb the dead?” said the skeleton in a sepulchral voice.

Gregoire, in an agony of horror crossed himself, and attempted to speak, but his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth. He was not a coward against men but he was superstitious and feared the rising of the dead.

The skeleton slowly raised its mailed arm, pointed with its long fingers to the door.

“Go,” cried the voice, “and never intrude upon me more.”

But the jailor could not move, and Maurice appeared equally unable to stir.

“Go,” shouted the voice, “or abide my anger—begone!”

At this moment the lamp went out, and the sound of a sword drawing from its scabbard was heard distinctly.

“Holy Virgin, protect me!” cried Gregoire, and, impelled by fear, he rushed out of the room. Armand quickly followed and the jailor being just behind him, fled with greater speed. He dashed down the staircase, and throwing open the door where the soldiers were assembled cried as he rushed by—

“The Count de Mœnsigny has risen from the dead. Mercy!—mercy!”

Dechappelle, in his long cloak, quickly followed, and his face pale with anxiety and excitement, left no doubt on the minds of the soldiers as to the reality of the statement. He was allowed to pass unmolested, and with a beating heart fled from the door. Never did he bless an insult more than then, when one of the least credulous cried out, tauntingly,—

“ Ah, Maurice, who will brag now !”

Another shouted after him,—

“ You’ll have to sleep there to-night, old boy !”

But the object of their solicitude was still awaiting with beating heart the moment when he might step by them unperceived. It is now half-past nine o’clock—in half an hour it might be too late; for the ship was to weigh at a few minutes past ten. Five minutes—ten minutes—a quarter of an hour past, and

the soldiers seemed all on the alert. One stood at the open door joking with them as to the probable return of Gregoire and Maurice. At ten minutes to ten the man sat down, and in another moment the turnkey, summoning up all his courage, slipped by, and slammed the door violently.

The soldiers all started up: and one of them cried,—

“I am sure I saw some one pass.”

“It is the Count’s ghost!” said one of the credulous.

“More likely one of the prisoners escaped,” cried a sturdy trooper. “A light! We will search the prison.”

In another minute they all rushed up the staircase sword in hand. They entered No. 40, the door of which was half open.

“To the Red Tower!” cried one of them.
“The prisoner has escaped.”

CHAPTER XXXI.

MEANWHILE, Armand almost overcome by his feelings hurried through the courtyard after Gregoire. His clothes ensured him his passage through the great gate of the prison, and after following his jailor for a short distance he returned leisurely, as if after a walk, and slipping beneath the portico indicated by Maurice, awaited with impatience the arrival of his deliverer.

The time seemed to pass on leaden wings, every moment appeared to him an age. To escape without Maurice was next to impossible, as it would excite suspicion if he were to go

on board one of the vessels during the night—in the morning it would be too late. As the clock of the prison tolled the quarter his heart seemed to turn sick within him: and in the midst of his expectation a man approached.

“*Mon ami,*” said the new comer, in a tremulous voice, “was that a quarter to ten that struck?”

“It was, my good man,” returned Armand, rather impatiently.

“Ugh!” muttered the other, “I needn’t go back yet. I wish I never had to return at all.”

This was not intended for any one but himself, but Armand did not let pass a word, and recognised the speaker. It was Gregoire! Luckily the jailor had never seen him but once, and did not know his voice.

“Will you come to the cabaret over there, and have a glass of wine?” asked Gregoire,

glad to have a companion in the lonely street.

"No, thank you, my friend," said Dechappelle, "I am waiting for some one whom I expect every moment. Good night."

"Good night."

And so, saying the jailor moved rapidly away. Hardly had he turned the corner of the street when Maurice came through the gate of the prison.

"Who are you?" cried the man at the entrance.

"Why Maurice, to be sure; don't you know me?" said the turnkey.

"Yes; but Maurice just passed by."

"Fool!" cried the man angrily; "get a lamp and look at me. Quick! there is a prisoner at large in the court, escaped, and I am going to stop the ships from departing till they are searched. There, don't you know me?"

“Yes,” said the man sullenly, for he was afraid to confess he had let a stranger pass, for fear of being discharged for negligence.

“There, now,” cried Maurice, “close the gates, and don’t let anyone in or out except Gregoire.”

The porter instantly shut to the gate, and Maurice hastened over to the portico, where Armand absolutely embraced him in his gratitude.

“Pooh—pooh!” muttered the turnkey, as they moved along as fast as they could walk, “don’t give way. Why, it’s all done for money, though I can’t say that I don’t feel a sort of liking for you all the same.”

Dechappelle could not speak; his excitement and emotion almost choked him. Just as they passed the cabaret where Gregoire was drinking, a loud roar of artillery burst over the island.

"We are discovered, by Heavens!" cried the turnkey; "walk rapidly on."

Gregoire came rushing out of the cabaret and made for the prison, while the fugitives hastened on at a moderate pace for fear of exciting suspicion. Armand, who had not been out in the open air for a year, now almost staggered once or twice, and would probably have fallen had he not been supported by the strong arm of his companion.

"Maurice," he said in a low voice, "I will not again be taken. They may kill me, but they shall not again make me a captive."

"We are all safe," answered Maurice, though his heart belied his words; "in ten minutes we shall be beyond their reach."

On coming to a dark part of the street they profited by the obscurity, to take advantage of the other disguise. Throwing off their cloaks, and pitching them into a *porte cochère*,

they appeared in the dress of two common sailors.

"I defy them to discover us now," said Maurice, as they neared the quay.

Before, however, they did so, a second burst of artillery resounded through the town, and seeing a gendarme, Maurice said--

"What is that?"

"A prisoner has escaped from the prison," said the gendarme; "poor devil!"

"Good night," cried Maurice and Armand together as they left the spot. "We must haste on, now," added the former, "or Gregoire will send to stop the sailing of the ships."

As they reached the boats and leaped in, a man came rushing up. It was the jailor.

"Shall I row you?" cried Armand.

"Yes, directly, to that ship yonder," said Gregoire, in a voice of impatience, and jumping in. "Take the boats," added he to some

men who followed him, "and give the governor's orders to the other ships likewise."

In another minute they were at the ship's side. Gregoire scrambled up, followed by his two companions.

"Do not follow me," said he, "I shall want you to row me back."

"All right," interrupted Maurice, as the boat was swung up at the side.

"You are commanded by the Governor of the Chateau Noir," said the jailor to the captain of the sloop, "not to sail to-night, as a prisoner has escaped from the prison."

"And do you expect me to attend to these orders?" said the brother of Maurice, as the anchor was weighed and thrown on the deck.

"To be sure," said the jailor, "you must. Hold," he added as the ship began to move, "I suspect you have the two fugitives on board, for the turnkey has gone with him. Hold,—I say—Help."

“Not so fast, my old fellow,” said Maurice, putting his hand over his mouth, “don’t you remember your old companion?”

As the vessel slowly left the harbour shouts were raised from many of the ships anchored near, and to add to Armand’s alarm sheets of flame rushed forth from the battlements of the castle, while the roar of the artillery resounded far across the quiet waters. A strong breeze, however, was blowing, and the smuggler’s craft moved quickly out of the harbour. The night was dark so that little could be seen before or behind, and as the fugitives took care not to show a light it was some minutes before the persons on the island could make out which way she was going.

When, however, the moon shone out brilliantly from behind a cloud, and disclosed the sloop making way merrily before the wind, a shout was raised and a Government schooner

weighed anchor immediately. In a few minutes it was run out of the harbour and the chase commenced.

“For Heaven’s sake put me on shore,” cried Gregoire; “if they—”

“Hold your tongue, you old fool,” said Maurice.

“But if they find me here, they will say I helped his escape.”

“I expect you won’t be found here if you don’t hold your tongue, old babbler,” exclaimed the captain.

“But they’ll think I am an accomplice,” screamed the old jailor.

“What’s that to me?” said the smuggler.

“Help—help,” shouted Gregoire; “Help, help.”

“Shove a boat over the side and throw him into it,” said Maurice, “or as sure as I am here we shall be found out.”

A boat was accordingly lowered, and though half full of water, received the bulky form of the jailor, and then with a plunge it was left behind in the darkness. The man soon made his way to the shore, escaping by a very little being run over by the Government vessel. The sloop was an excellent sailor and made good way, but their pursuer was a better, and by slow degrees the distance between them lessened.

“Have you no guns?” said Armand.

“Only one—a Long Tom, and who could see to fire it on such a night as this?”

“I could!” exclaimed Armand.

“And how on earth did you learn to beat old sailors?” said the smuggler, contemptuously.

“I have learnt somehow or other, and will try if you choose to allow me.”

“Oh, certainly, by all means try, but succeeding is another thing.”

Dechapelle went to the cannon—which was loaded up to the muzzle,—primed it, pointed it, and fired. The smoke that overhung the deck cleared away almost immediately, and they saw by the light of the moon that some damage had been done to their pursuer.

“Bravo, my boy,” cried the smuggler; “give me your hand; you don’t mind shaking hands with an old sailor.”

Armand grasped the seaman’s hand, at the same time saying—

“We must give them another dose, or we shall never succeed even now.”

This was done, and with effect; but although some confusion was caused, the vessel sped onwards merrily, and gained fast upon the smuggling sloop.

“What is to be done?” cried Maurice to his brother, “we cannot fight.”

“Fight!” cried Armand; “yes, fight! Do

you imagine they shall ever again take me alive?"

"That's right, Monsieur," said the smuggler; "but there's no occasion to talk of dying yet. I have a plan."

"Capital!" cried both the fugitives when they heard it stated in a few words.

A boat was lowered, and during a momentary obscurity of the moon Armand and Maurice descended into it and drifted slowly away. The government vessel soon shot past them, and came up with the sloop a short way a-head.

"How dare you attack a poor trader in sight of one of his Majesty's forts?" cried Maurice's brother through a trumpet.

"That won't do, my fine fellow," answered the captain of the other ship. "You know very well that this vessel belongs to his Gracious Majesty. Heave to."

“What is your purpose?” asked the smuggler.

“To search the vessel.”

“Oh, very well—that is all very well; but mind, if you attack us, our men will fight.”

The ship was boarded, and a diligent search made. Nothing, however, was found, and as there was no place where anyone could be hidden, the officer was fairly puzzled.

“Havn’t you a brother named Maurice?” asked he.

“A brother! No. *Ma foi*, I never had one. My father died when I was very young, and I am an only child.”

“Indeed!” said the officer in astonishment, but convinced by the man’s boldness; “then which is the smuggler’s vessel.”

“That small craft lying out there; the name is the Three Buoys, and the—”

“Thank you, thank you; but don’t be so

quick to fire into a government vessel again, or you will some day get into trouble."

"I hope I didn't do much damage, Monsieur?"

"Oh! no, only carried away half the bowsprit, that's all. Good night."

"Good night. What a soft set."

This was muttered between his teeth as the government ship moved slowly away. When the latter had disappeared, the Three Buoys lay to, and after a short delay the boat containing the anxious fugitives appeared at the stern. They were taken in, and Armand was once more free.

As he stood at the hull of the vessel, and strained his eyes towards that land he was, in all probability, never to behold again, a tear bedewed his cheek, and a multitude of strange emotions agitated his breast. How many hours of happiness had he passed in that

sunny land—but then how many of sorrow! On those shores it was that he had first met Pauline, and he might well shower blessings upon them—but then it was on those shores he had been insulted, imprisoned, unhappy. He was leaving the land of his birth—his childhood—of his earlier scenes in life—but he was now being wafted away to a clime far sunnier—far more full of joyousness—he was hurrying forward to happiness.

Once beyond France he cared no longer for Louis or his myrmidons; but with a light heart and an eager breast he watched the shores as they coasted along—receding and receding mile by mile. He could have wished to have flown in his impatience, but the ship moved steadily on regardless of its previous freight.

At Cadiz he parted from his smuggling friends, and after paying the enormous sum

with which he bought life and liberty, he embarked on board an Italian vessel bound for Naples. With a light and steady breeze they proceeded until almost within sight of land, when a storm of terrible violence broke over the vessel, causing the timbers to shiver and strain and yawn. The sailors crossed themselves and declared the ship lost; but Armand refused to believe that almost with happiness in his grasp he should be deprived of it in an instant.

CHAPTER XXXII.

NAPLES lay bathed in light. On one side the delicious country laughing in the richness of an Italian summer was sleeping in a sweet and calm repose. On the other side was the bay with its thousand wavelets, tipped and gilded by the beams of the setting sun—here open—here sheltered and overhung by dark forests and verdant hills. The steeples of its churches and the towers of its convents glittered in the light, while beyond to the east rose the dark form of the Castel Nuovo with its lofty walls frowning down upon the sea. The Castel del Uovo with its confused

buildings and its ancient walls lay to the west, while the Castle of St. Elmo rose on the other side—an useless but imposing pile.

The day had been one of extreme warmth. The sky even now although of deep azure, seemed on fire towards the horizon—the air appeared to contain fiery particles, and the inhabitants, as was their wont, were seated on the summits of houses enjoying the cooler breeze that blew in from the bay. Many a sail dotted the sea beyond—a few small craft were moving in the harbour, while the dark heavy forms of some war ships and large merchantmen lay motionless near the quays.

At the extremity of the town was a house of moderate dimensions. Encompassed by trees of rich and luxuriant foliage and half hidden by their branches clothed in the leaves of summer, it commanded a splendid view of the

bay. On its summit was a group of five persons—an old couple; a young couple, and a lady of some twenty-three years. These were Monsieur and Madame Dechapelle, Monsieur and Madame Bassompierre, and Pauline Lefevre. They were conversing on the beauty of the weather, and the calmness of the evening, and it was observed that Pauline wore a more than usually happy expression.

“You seem happy to-day, Pauline,” said Heloise, “have you heard good news?”

“No; I have heard nothing; but I was thinking of Armand,” answered the girl, her face generally pale flushing as she pronounced his name.

“What can make you cheerful with relation to poor Armand?” said Madame Dechapelle.

“He bade me be cheerful when we parted mother,” replied Pauline, “besides he may escape—who knows.”

“You speak strangely,” remarked Dechappelle, “one could imagine you had had a dream and believed in it.”

“I can hardly explain it myself,” said Pauline, “but I *do* feel more happy than usual.”

“If I believed in presentiments,” exclaimed Hercule Bassompierre, “I should say something is going to happen; but whether good or not I cannot guess.”

I do not believe in presentiments, and in fact am not at all superstitious; but when things are about to happen there is sometimes an indefinable feeling in the mind. Pauline was possessed by this feeling, and imagined that an event was to occur which would bring her happiness or misfortune, though she rather inclined to the former.

The party descended to the sitting room as soon as the sun had set and the air began to

blow colder. Before they did so, however, they noticed that a few clouds had begun to gather in the south-east, and that the wind which had all day been calm and still, had now commenced rolling the waves in dark masses into the bay. Before night it had completely set in: a gale had risen, and the waters of the harbour rose high, tossing the huge vessels that lay on the quays, and roaring hoarsely against the banks. But out at sea the waves rolled high and fiercely—the wind blew a hurricane—the thunder boomed loudly overhead, while the forked lightning rushed down from the opening clouds, and with a hiss was lost in the ocean.

In the midst of this tempest a small ship was labouring along the coast, making its way as best it might towards Naples. Many times it shivered as the wind sent a huge black billow flat against its side, and blew the only sails

left unfurled into shreds. It was found necessary to take in everything but the jib, as the wind, which rose higher every moment, threatened at each blast to hurl them to destruction.

On the prow of the vessel, holding on by the bulwarks, stood a tall figure, wrapped in a large cloak, which effectually shielded him from the storm. He stood erect as a statue, his gaze was fixed on Naples, the lights from the houses and light-house of which could now be seen, and seemed to be under the influence of some strong emotion. Another man stood by his side, dressed in the habit of a sailor.

“Jacobo,” said the former, addressing this personage, “shall we ever reach Naples?”

“Why, yes, signor, it is to be hoped we shall. But—the Blessed Virgin protect us—the wind rises every moment.”

"I know a little of navigation myself," cried the stranger, "and I would venture to say I would bring the Seraphina into harbour quicker than that rascal at the helm, who appears to be in a state of abject terror."

"Does the senor, wish so very much to enter Naples to-night?" said the captain, for such Jacobo was.

"I do, Jacobo," exclaimed the person he addressed; "every moment is precious to me."

"The ship can hardly bear the one sail she has," said the sailor, "and so it would be throwing away our lives to hazard more. But if you think you could bring the Seraphina into Naples quicker than Pietro, and will be responsible, you may try."

"Very well," cried the stranger, and making his way to the helm, he pushed the man hastily aside, and assumed the guidance of the ship.

“Peste,” he muttered to himself, “that fool would have run us over some rocks in another minute.”

The wind becoming slightly calmer, the *Seraphina* approached to harbour more easily. It was still unsafe, however, to unfurl more sails, and the ship therefore advanced but slowly. The man who had assumed the helm could only vent his anger in words.

“To think,” cried he to himself, as he steered for the mouth of the bay, “that this cursed storm should rise just as I am near to Naples, near all that I hold most dear. *Ma foi*, I almost believe in destiny.”

Even then he only said “almost;” he was too sensible to believe in a Fate.

As the *Seraphina* steered into the harbour, the waters of which were considerably calmer than the sea outside, she hung out two lights at her bows. To make her way to the quay,

however, was a work of some difficulty, but when at length she did approach the shore she was greeted by a triumphant shout from the crowd that, in spite of the weather, had assembled to render assistance in case of accident.

Among the first of those who leapt on shore was the man who had so safely guided the *Serephina* in the tempest. Seeing an inn close at hand, he rushed rather than ran in—called for a glass of wine, drank it off hastily, and after asking the way to a house in the neighbourhood, plunged away into the darkness up the road to Sorrento.

During the continuance of the storm the family at M. Dechapelle's house did not attempt to go to sleep: but stood gazing out of the large window at the light which every moment appeared and then disappeared behind the waves.

"Poor fellows!" said Madame, "how the ship is tossed. Do you think, Claude," she added, addressing her husband, "they will reach Naples in safety?"

"Oh! yes my dear," said he, "they have entered the bay, and will now be able to come into safe anchorage."

Pauline did not join in the conversation, but watched with intensity every movement of the vessel. She thought in her own mind, "to what danger may not Armand be at this moment exposed" She viewed with interest the little vessel, or rather the two lights, at the bow, as they neared the quay and finally anchored; for she had a kind heart, that could not see unmoved any fellow creature in distress.

After gazing out a few moments, they retired from the window and once more sat in a group to talk. It was late in the night, but

either influenced by the scene they had witnessed, or convinced of the impossibility of sleeping in such a storm, they felt no inclination to retire to rest. They did not speak much but sat listening to the howling of the wind and the loud booming of the thunder. Just as midnight approached a hasty step was heard approaching up the garden—a loud, but tremulous knock was heard at the door, and the whole family started up. Pauline, before any one, rushed out to the door: but did not at once recognise the features of the stranger.

“Pauline,” said he, “do you not know me?”

“Armand—Armand,” cried the girl throwing her arms about his neck, “have you at length returned.”

After a few moments Armand said in a very low voice—

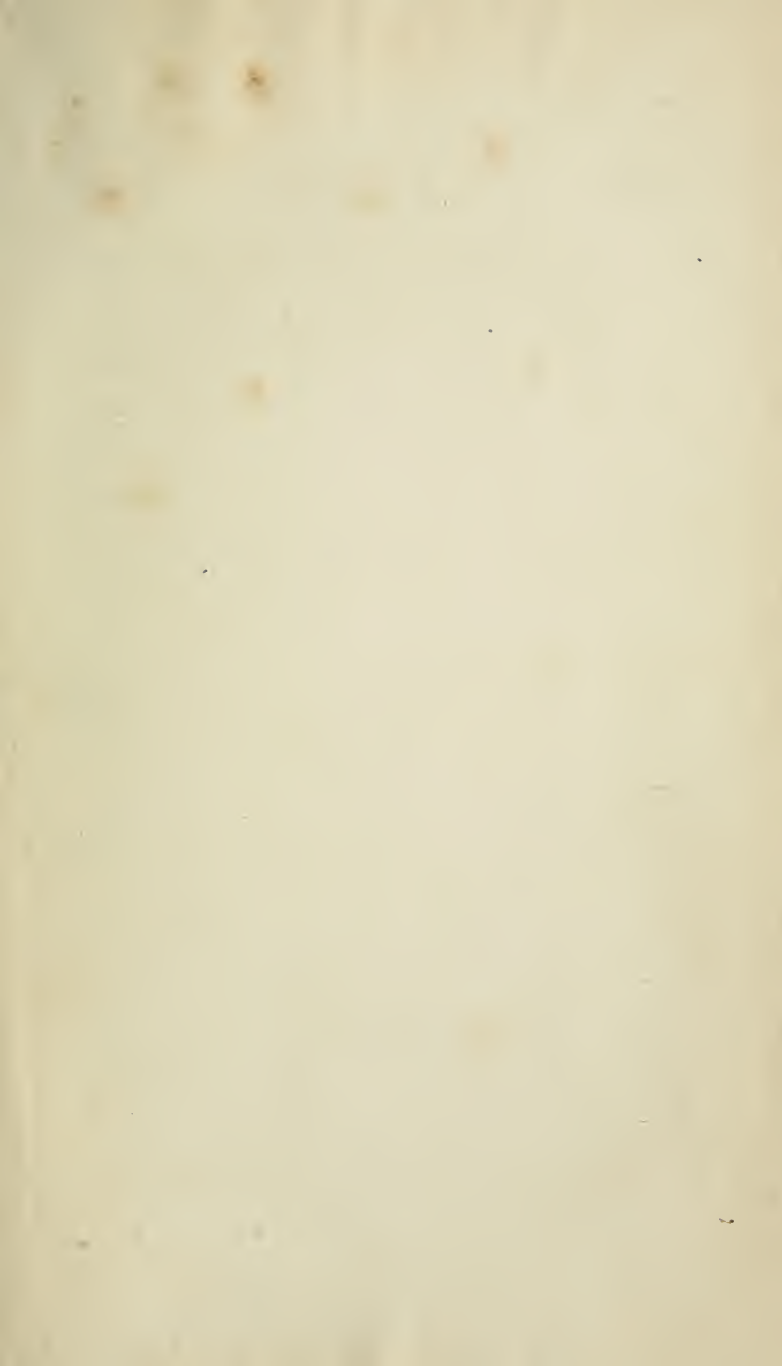
“Let us go in, dearest. You are quite drenched with the rain.”

The pleasure of that night cannot be described—it must be left to the reader’s imagination to conceive the overflowing happiness of Pauline; the gratitude to Heaven of M. and Madame Dechappelle; the joy experienced by Hercule; and the sisterly delight of Heloise.

“Pauline,” said Armand on the morning of their wedding day, “what troubles have I not endured?”

“Yes, Armand,” whispered she, “but are we not now happy?”

THE END.





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